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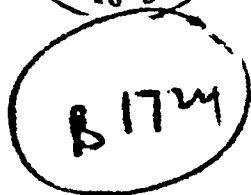
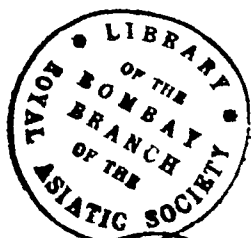
Wanderings and Wooings
East of Suez

Wanderings and Wooings East of Suez

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ac.

By
Ethel Boverton Redwood

"Ship me somewheres East of Suez"



AX 37
London

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TO JUM
WITH LOVE

My grateful thanks are due to my friend Miss Edith Calkin, who has rendered valuable assistance in preparing the Manuscript. E. B. R.

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Wanderings and Wooings East of Suez

CHAPTER I

THE VOYAGE

"We're down, hull down on the Long trail—
The trail that is always new."

RUDYARD KIPLING.

THE swing and the throb of a mighty vessel as she feels the ocean under her keel, the whistle of the wind in her rigging, the salt taste of the invigorating air—for lovers of the sea these things have a charm which is indescribable.

On a cool, grey morning in April, the P. and O. "Lulia" steamed out of Marseilles' harbour *en route* for the Far East.

There were not many passengers; few, save those who are obliged, go to India for the hot season. Most of them were army men, going to join their regiments. Women were very much in the minority. Two of them had come overland, and had not yet made the acquaintance of their fellow-passengers. The elder was a lady of middle

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age, and her somewhat florid face irradiated optimism. She was travelling with her niece, who was slight and young, and had the brilliantly fair complexion and golden-brown hair not uncommon in Englishwomen.

The latter, having finished the inspection of her cabin, leant alone over the bulwarks, silent and absorbed. She seemed quite unconscious of the presence of a young man who was standing near her, though his gay blue eyes were fixed upon her with an intentness which was only saved from rudeness by its obvious unconsciousness.

At length he spoke, breaking the spell that held her :

“Do you not find it cold ? ”

She turned with a start. “Very.” Her tone was distant, but a little dimple that lurked in the corner of her mouth encouraged him.

“It will be warmer soon.” He laughed. “And we shall be praying for a cool breeze. Are you going to India ? ”

“Yes.”

He came nearer and lounged on the rail beside her.

“You are very monosyllabic,” he said. “You are trying to freeze me. But I am so lonely. Please let me talk to you.”

“I am sorry if I was rude. I am afraid I was dreaming. I cannot believe that this is all real and that I—Carol Medenham

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—am actually on my way to the Far East."

"Are you going to Shanghai?"

"Later on, perhaps. But we tranship at Aden, and go to Bombay."

"Why are you—?" he began, but she checked him with a gesture.

"Please," she begged, "don't ask me why we are going to India in the hot weather! We are worn out with answering that question at home."

"Very well," he replied. "Any more subjects tabooed?"

"Oh no!" She smiled; and they seated themselves in two deck-chairs that stood near.

"Then permit me to say that I am very glad you chose this time of year."

"And why?" asked Carol.

"Surely it is obvious. I am very glad to have the pleasure of travelling with you."

She blushed. "Really? Why, you don't know me!"

"That is easily remedied. I mean to know you very well soon. I—like you. I have been admiring you from a distance for a long time."

"Oh, please!" Carol protested, half-laughing. "In the morning and between strangers!"

"I am sorry," he said; but he did not look very repentant. "I will try again to—"

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night, when we know each other better. Do you like poetry?"

"Sometimes," she admitted. "I like to read it when I am by myself and in the mood."

"A girl gave this to me before I sailed." He produced a small book from his pocket. "Thomas Hood." He turned the pages.

"I don't know any of his," said Carol. "Isn't he considered rather—?"

"I don't mean to read them all to you," he interrupted. "But look," he handed her the volume. "Here's one applicable to you, 'Going to Bombay' it's called, and see, 'Brown hair, blue eyes,' that describes you exactly."

Carol laughed.

"Further on she says goodbye with grief to Mr. M. That's what you'll be doing to me at Aden."

"Don't flatter yourself that I shall say goodbye with grief to you," said Carol demurely. "If there's any grief it will be all on your side."

"If?" He leant a little nearer to her and sighed.

Carol rose.

"Let us walk," she said. "I am restless. I feel the mystic East coming nearer, nearer, nearer."

He watched her as she stood there in her tailor suit of white serge, a dainty example of

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English womanhood, straight, and tall, and fair.

"I wonder whether you will feel so enthusiastic when you are grilling under the suns of India!" he said as they strolled aft.

"I wonder," answered Carol, but her eyes were shining and a bright colour stole into her cheeks. "I have always been a sun-lover. Even when I was quite a child, a dull, grey day made me unhappy and peevish; and directly the sun came out and the skies grew blue, I rejoiced and was merry again. It is just the same now, and I believe I shall be able to stand any amount of heat. Oh, there is Mrs. Lake."

"Your mother?" he asked.

"No, my aunt, and a dear."

"Please introduce me. My name is Fairs. I know yours."

"How can you? Oh, I forgot, I said it just now. Auntie, allow me to present a fellow-traveller to you—Mr. Fairs."

"Captain," he corrected, smiling.

"Captain Fairs—going to—By the way, where are you going to?"

"Shanghai," he replied. "At least, that was my intention."

"Have you changed your mind then?" asked Mrs. Lake, innocently, beaming at him in a motherly way.

"I don't know." He looked at Carol, who was absently gazing out to sea.

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"Are you going out to stay?" she enquired vaguely.

"Well, no, not exactly. I am commissioned to write articles on the motoring roads of India, China, and Japan." He looked again at Carol. "Shall I go to Bombay first, Miss Medenham?"

"Please don't ask me." She frowned. "You are the best judge."

Captain Fairs turned to Mrs. Lake. "Your niece won't tell me why you are taking this journey in the hot weather," he said plaintively.

"How absurd," laughed Mrs. Lake. "There is no mystery about it. We have many friends who will be at Simla while the vice-regal party is there, and I want the dear child to see a little of hill-station life. I always think one can put up with heat, or any other discomforts, when one is looking forward to a good time, don't you?"

They came face to face with an elderly man who was pacing up and down the deck. He looked the typical Indian officer, evidently the possessor of a liver and a temper. He had a bronzed face, iron-grey hair, and blue eyes of a piercing quality.

He greeted Captain Fairs, who stopped and introduced him to his companions.

"This is Colonel Shore, who thinks the heat of India not only bearable, but pleasant."

"I am sure I shall stand it all right,

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anyhow," said Carol, with a smile, "for I love heat."

The Colonel turned and looked at her quizzically as she spoke. "What about those roses?" he asked, laughing. "You will lose them, you know. Does that trouble you?"

"Not a bit," she answered. "I prefer pale people. And there is always Dr. Williams' famous recipe to fall back on!"

* * * * *

At lunch, Carol found herself seated next to a big burly colonial whom she had noticed taking active exercise round the deck. He commenced civilities at once by passing her the salt.

"Are you going far?" he asked her when she had helped herself, and his voice fairly shook the saloon.

Carol cast a little amused glance at Captain Fairs, who was on her other side, and then replied :

"To India, China, and Japan."

"Too hot!" he exclaimed, his mouth full of curry. "You'll be grilled alive. I will tell you something," he dropped his voice. "I knew a lady who went to India in the hot weather—at just this time of year, to be exact. She found she was obliged to leave off so many of her clothes that she lost her self-respect and was never able to mix with civilized persons again. Fact, I assure you."

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Here Captain Fairs, who was listening with lowering brow, burst in with a hurried enquiry as to the merits of the curry, and took occasion to whisper to Carol that she must change her place at table. "It is quite impossible for you to sit next to that man," he concluded crossly.

Carol could not refrain from laughing.

"Funny story?" enquired the colonial, catching sight of her red face. "Tell me. I love 'em. Bet I know a worse one."

Carol collapsed again.

"Carol, dear!" interposed Mrs. Lake's gentle voice from the other side of the table, in accents of mild reproof.

"Oh, I must laugh," she said weakly. "Do let's go! Have you finished?"

"You must have fruit," said the big colonial. "Everyone eats fruit on board. Have a banana?"

Carol meekly accepted one, afraid to speak.

"I wonder if you'll like Japan," went on the strident voice. "Can't say I care for the people there. A lot of little stinking monkeys, I call them."

"But surely," Carol said, as frigidly as she could, "the scenery is lovely!"

"Give me Sydney," he replied; "Sydney in the winter, with a blue sky overhead, crisp snow underfoot, and a pretty girl on your arm. I can't stand London in winter; can you?"

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"I'm very fond of London all the year round, but I happen to have been born there," Carol said quietly, "so, of course, I love it."

"Don't see that it follows," he retorted. "I was born in Berlin in a wretched little street. My mother died before I could talk plainly, and my father took me to Sydney. Never had the smallest desire to see my birthplace. Fact is, my mother's people were rough folk, and we're a bit above 'em now. Do you know, I believe you'd like Sydney."

"Miss Medenham," said Captain Fairs, touching her arm, "shall we go now and see the purser?"

"Got your deck-chairs?" asked the colonial affably, as they left him. "Ah! that's right; I'll put mine alongside."

Carol looked him straight in the face, and did not answer.

"I'll get your places changed at once," said Captain Fairs, as they went up the companion. "That is a most objectionable man! And may I change mine, too?" he asked suddenly, his boyish face suffused with colour.

"Why, yes," answered Carol, and rather, to her annoyance, she blushed too.

Later in the day, Carol was dozing over a book when the colonial strolled up and dropped into a chair beside her. A little way off, Mrs. Lake and Colonel Shore were talking together.

"Good sailor?" asked the colonial.

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Without waiting for Carol to reply he went on: "That's right! so am I. Seen Maude Allan in London? No? Well, you've not missed much except the Salomè—the rest's a fraud! A little girl I saw in Paris could give her points. She only wore wings!"

"Indeed!" Carol pointed out a gossamer cloud and suggested the possibility of rain.

"Yes—fact, I assure you," he went on. "'La Surprise' they called her, and I tell you—but there, you must see her. I took a girl I know, and she would come out. I went back alone next night, you bet!"

"Do you like the sea?" asked Carol after a slight pause, during which she had sat tongue-tied and scarlet.

The man laughed.

"A delicate hint! You wish to change the subject. So be it! Yes, I do like the sea, but dry land is better. A nice little dinner in a nice little restaurant in London town, with your best girl or your best boy—eh? That's the best of all, isn't it?"

Carol rose. "I am going to ask Captain Fairs to take me for a walk," she said.

"I'm wondering," went on the colonial, unabashed, "why on earth you chose the hot season for your travels?" He lounged back in his chair, and looked up at her lazily.

"Surely," said Carol sternly, as Captain Fairs eagerly joined her, "that is our affair! Maybe we are Salamanders."

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CHAPTER II

PORT SAID

"Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall
meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment
Seat."
—RUDYARD KIPLING.

THE first sight of the mysterious East!

Will the traveller ever forget the thrill with which he sees before him, for the first time, the stretch of sandy desert, the camels against the sky-line, the white mosques gleaming under the fierce rays of the sun?

The ship was approaching Port Said. Carol leant eagerly over the rail, and strained her eyes for a glimpse of the town. When at last it came into view, she felt a pang of disappointment—almost of disillusionment. Along the quay stretched a line of low, dingy buildings, grey-roofed, and plastered with English advertisements. Dirty coal-barges rocked in the harbour; the dust from them rose up and darkened the sky. She raised her kodak apathetically and took a snapshot. She did not move from her place by the bulwarks as the ship slowly slid into the harbour. Colonel Shore

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joined her, and they laughed over the swarming crowds of natives on the coal-lighters which were rapidly approaching the "Lulia."

"We shall be coaling all day," said the Colonel. "Look at these black devils, fighting like cats. Could anything be blacker?"

"Only coal," answered Carol. "Look!" as one slipped and fell into the water. "Oh, they've caught him! But how dangerous!"

"You wait," said the Colonel, "to say 'how dangerous' till you see them running single file over a very slim plank, carrying baskets of coal. Yet, I think, there is very rarely an accident."

"To you this is all so ordinary," said Carol, "and to me so new and interesting. How many times have you made this journey?"

"Fifteen," he replied. "And please God this is my last, though I don't know what I shall do in England without my wife. I lost her last August."

Carol murmured something sympathetic.

"I am dreading the mess in India," he went on. "To be once more a bachelor, after many years of married life! I am afraid to keep on my bungalow now. It has too many rooms for a lonely man, who never means to entertain. I am sure you sympathise with me, Miss Medenham."

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Carol nodded. But her attention wandered ; her eyes roved over the strange, unfamiliar scene. Then she saw Captain Fairs coming towards her, and a little smile parted her lips. The Colonel saw, turned away, and sighed.

Presently the ship came to anchor. Crowds of dusky figures laden with baskets swarmed on board.

Captain Fairs came up to Carol.

"Your aunt says I may take you ashore," he announced eagerly, and they lost no time in embarking in a small boat. They had no sooner landed than Carol was hailed by the donkey-boys with shouts of "Mrs. Langtry," "Mrs. Cornwallis West," and was invited to take a donkey-ride. This she declined to do, and she and her companion set out on foot to explore the town. Many times during their walk she stood still and gazed, fascinated, at the scene before her. The busy street was peopled with natives in brightly-hued costumes, selling trashy jewellery, fly-whisks, and cigarettes, jostling each other, and showing their white teeth in broad smiles. A string of heavy-laden camels, stately and slow, were coming in from the desert, their pale remote eyes restless and watchful, while beside them ran a little naked Arab boy, prodding them with a cane, and shrieking wildly.

"It's all right for an hour," said Captain

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Fairs, smiling at Carol's enthusiasm. "But how about the poor devils who have to live here?"

Even as he spoke, a carriage drove past them, containing a European official. He was pale, worn, and prematurely aged by the climate. The coachman was urging the thin, weary horses to a gallop, and the on-lookers were enveloped in a cloud of dust.

"Oh, I know," Carol replied in a low voice. "After a time the dust, and flies, and heat, and the glaring sunlight, must become intolerable, and one's whole being must be filled with an unbearable ache for the shady lanes and green fields and even the rain of England. But this is my first peep at the East, and it has for me a curious, indefinable charm. I feel as if I were asleep, and in the midst of a beautiful dream. Please don't wake me! I dread losing my first thrills."

Her companion smiled down at her. "One can see you are not a *blasee* old traveller!" he said indulgently.

They reached the hotel, and sat down under the shelter of the cool and shady verandah. Captain Fairs ordered tea.

"I never stir without my mother at home," exclaimed Carol gaily. "I feel so emancipated. Auntie lets me do just as I like. She trusts me to take care of myself."

"Some one else will have a right to take care of you some day," he replied. Then

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he added impulsively, with an angry frown, "Somehow I hate the idea."

* * * * *

- At dinner Carol grew restless. Her little visit to the shore had filled her with a wild desire to go again. She had noticed, she declared, on some placards that a "Madame Oyster Patty" would sing that night. She implored her aunt to take her to the entertainment, and Captain Fairs warmly seconded her. But Mrs. Lake shook her head.

"You go with Captain Fairs," she said. "I am feeling a little weary, and shall enjoy a quiet read."

When they came up on deck ready to start, their attention was arrested by a native conjuror who had come aboard. He produced rabbits from eggs, and trees from stones, and in a quite unaccountable way, caused a mango tree to grow.

Carol and Captain Fairs were both too anxious to get ashore to gaze long at such marvels, and they were soon embarked on a somewhat perilous trip across the dark water.

They were disappointed to find that "Madame Oyster Patty" was billed, not for that night, but for the following Saturday. However, they contented themselves with the Casino, which they found, after a long search, to be exactly opposite to where the ship was lying. They went in, sat down at a small table, and ordered Turkish coffee.

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Presently a motley orchestra, in which were women as well as men, filed in and began playing "The Dairymaids."

"Do you know," said Captain Fairs suddenly, "that I am always falling in love?"

"Really?" replied Carol demurely. "But—you know that doesn't interest me."

"No?" He studied his boots, and went on with a smile, "I'm engaged, and wish I could stop so. But I'm booked to get married in the autumn, worse luck!"

There was a slight pause.

"Why worse luck? Isn't she nice?"

"She is all that is sweet and lovely, but still—married! It is a fearsome thought. It's much better fun being engaged. I've been semi-engaged heaps of times, and that's the best of all. Only this time I went too far. It was such a lovely day, and she—she is a ripper, and we were in a dog-cart and somehow—By Jove! they're playing the 'Chocolate Soldier!'"

"When do you go home?" asked Carol.

"In the autumn, and then I shall bring my wife out in January for a tour. I can't keep away from India for long, though I had to chuck the army when my gov'nor died. See this stick? It looks like a sword-stick, but it's really for measuring ponies. Isn't it ingenious? You don't mind my telling you about myself, do you?"

"Of course not," Carol replied indiffer-

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ently. "Look! the band are sending round for money—quite a pretty girl, isn't she?"

The girl approached them with a bored and detached air, holding at arm's length a little shell.

"She is pretty," agreed Captain Fairs. "I shall give her half-a-crown. Bang goes my last change!"

"Look," cried Carol, "there are some of the other passengers! They have discovered our entertainment. Now I can't tell everyone that we saw native dancing and weird side-shows. Listen! They're playing 'The Mosquito Parade.' Doesn't it make you long to dance?"

She bowed to the little party from the ship. Colonel Shore came across to her.

"Have you ever heard a better band?" he asked. "Do look at the first violin—the young lady in a pink blouse! She is obviously the belle of the party. I have been watching her vigorous flirtation with the 'cellist, and the consequent despair of the man at the pay-desk. See how he is gazing at her with his pale, reflective eye!"

The journey back to the ship was full of adventure, for the lamp that served as mast-head light to their little boat went out. Strenuous efforts were made to relight it, while the boat was allowed to drift. Only after it had collided with several small craft and crashed into a little pier were the efforts

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abandoned. The boat was pushed clear with some difficulty, and at last they reached the great ship which loomed above them in the darkness, her portholes and deck a blaze of light.

A little American lady, who was improvising on the piano, looked up as Carol came into the saloon. They had had several talks together and were by way of being excellent friends.

"Had a good time?" she asked.

Carol went up to her and leant one elbow on the piano.

"We've had a splendid time," she replied. "We've heard all the popular musical comedies on a string band, and got quite hilarious on coffee. Captain Fairs was so taken with the first violin that he gave her half-a-crown."

"Well, your evening has been more amusing than mine!" The American lady sighed. "A wretched young man insisted on confiding his troubles to me. He said we were 'kindred souls.'" She made a little grimace at Captain Fairs, and nodded good-night to Carol.

"Do you think," asked Captain Fairs, as he parted from Carol at the head of the companion, "that we are kindred souls?"

But she only laughed as she bade him good-night and went below.

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CHAPTER III

EAST OF SUEZ

"Brave bark,
Speed well, and bear us unto Wonderland!"
CRADOCK NEWTON.

CAROL stepped out of the shadowed cabin into the brilliant morning sunlight. Port Said had been left behind, and the ship was "going slow" down the Suez Canal.

On the right bank a little train puffed fussily by. On the left, men were busily at work widening the canal. On either side the desert stretched—wonderful, vague as a dream, a place of visions. At one moment it seemed to be peopled by a great army, rapidly moving towards some unseen objective. Gradually the army faded into the semblance of a battlemented city. This in its turn gave place to a glittering sea where boats rocked.

Carol drew in her breath as she gazed enchanted. So this was the mirage! The scene seemed so unreal and mysterious that she felt as if she had been transported to fairyland. She watched almost eagerly for giants to appear, as she had hopefully waited

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for fairies in the woods when she was a little girl.

She was soon joined by Captain Fairs. He, too, wore an intense expression. This braced Carol up. Any show of emotion in others always aroused in her a feeling of antagonism.

"It is grand!" he ejaculated. "It makes me feel poetical."

As he spoke a little Major, who had taken a seat near Carol, got up somewhat impatiently.

"Let's all go and play buckets!" he exclaimed. "Nothing better for a feeling like that."

* * * * *

Later in the day the news spread through the ship that a homeward-bound vessel was tied up ahead waiting for the "Lulia" to pass. All excitedly rushed to the side. Many relapsed into a profound melancholy at the sight of the cheering crowd that thronged the decks of the Nord-Deutscher Lloyd. A little bride's eyes filled with tears as she clung to her husband's arm. A French newly-married couple on their way to New Caledonia for five years, openly wiped the tears from their cheeks.

Suddenly a voice from the deck of the homeward-bound vessel rang out with startling distinctness in the clear air:

"Any one going to Colombo?"

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A fair-haired boy shouted back, "Yes, I am."

"Then give my love to the sweetest place on God's earth," the voice replied. "The place where I'd choose to live and die!"

"Ah, but you're going home!" cried the fair-haired boy, who had left his people for the first time.

Instantly a storm of cheers broke out from the other ship as the outward-bound vessel slid away from her.

* * * * *

"Miss Medenham," said Captain Fairs, as they strolled aft, "I want to ask you a question. May I?"

"Of course," she replied cheerfully, "why not?"

She seated herself in a long cane chair with an air of abandon. Captain Fairs drew up another.

"Go ahead," said Carol, a little wearily.

The wind had ruffled her hair, and it lay in little curls on her forehead. The keen air had brought a flush to her cheeks. She was looking very lovely, in her companion's estimation.

"It is just this," he said, looking at her closely: "should women flirt?"

Carol blushed, ever so slightly.

"Certainly not with engaged men," she replied, after a pause.

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"Oh, certainly not—of course," he agreed hurriedly ; "but in the abstract?"

"I think," she answered demurely, "that it entirely depends on the circumstances—and the individual."

"Oh!" he smiled insinuatingly, "I was thinking of a pretty woman and a lazy life—aboard ship, for example—and no one to be any the worse—and people that would be hurt miles away!"

After a minute's silence he went on :-

"By the way, my friend who landed at Port Said asked me to say good-bye to you for him."

"But I said good-bye," she replied ; "I called it out as he went."

"Yes, but he said he did not say good-bye properly."

"How silly!" Carol laughed. "We were not such great friends as all that. We did not want an affectionate farewell."

"Perhaps he did," said Captain Fairs meaningly.

* * * * *

After dinner that evening Carol went out on deck, the centre of a gay crowd. There was a stiff breeze blowing, so she draped her head in an old Spanish lace mantilla.—She looked extremely pretty and she knew it, and the knowledge gave an added sparkle to her eye and a wicked little curl to her lip.

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Captain Fairs contrived to draw her away from the others.

"Will you come and talk to me?" he asked her. "My chair is forward. We shall get a breeze there."

"Yes, if you like," she replied. "If you promise to amuse me."

When they were settled, 'Now we're cosy," he said. "Do you see the Southern Cross?"

"Is that it, really?"

"Yes, really. Do you admire it?" Then he went on in a low tone, "Do you know, Miss Medenham, I wish I had met you years ago."

"Why?" asked Carol, with an air of innocence.

At this moment Mrs. Lake approached them with Colonel Shore.

"Carol," she said, "have you seen the Southern Cross?"

"Yes," she replied, "Captain Fairs was good enough to show it to me just now."

The elder people moved away. The two sat silent for a few minutes. Presently Captain Fairs spoke.

"Your aunt called you Carol," he said. "It's a very pretty name."

"Do you think so?" She laughed. "My second name is Jane. Do you like that too? Oh, why do people always talk such rubbish on boats?"

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"You said this was your first experience of a voyage."

"So it is. But I have read books and talked to people and—"

"But honestly, I like your name," he protested. "And when I know you better I shall call you by it."

"Only if I allow it," said Carol, smiling into his admiring eyes.

"One of my friends," he said, with a sigh, "is being married to-day. Lucky fellow!"

"Do you know the girl then?"

"No."

"Then how ridiculous to say 'lucky fellow! She may have a bad temper or a squint.'"

"On the other hand, she may be like you."

"Oh please!"

"Do you mind?" he asked. "Well, I promise to be good. May I take your photograph to-morrow?"

"I don't know," she replied. "You might have done so to-day."

"Why to-day?"

"Well, you see, to-day I had my best hat on."

"And to-morrow?" he persisted. "Will you not wear it again?"

"If we have another fine day, and if I feel inclined."

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"I would have the prints ready for you when you come to Shanghai."

"But, you know, we may not come to Shanghai after all."

"There are splendid golf-links there," he urged.

"There are milestones on the Dover Road," retorted Carol.

"No, but really, you told me you played golf."

"Do you suppose I drag my golf-clubs round the world? I assure you, Captain Fairs, my camera and my diary are enough responsibility."

"Do you keep a diary?"

"I keep a diary and I have put you into it, and what I have said you will not like, and I am now going to join my aunt and Colonel Shore in drinking lemon squashes. So good-bye."

* * * * *

Later in the evening the big colonial came along the deck, and eagerly enquired of Carol if she had seen the homeward-bound liner which was passing on the other side. She felt a slight compunction at having so persistently snubbed him, so she went with him, and strained her eyes in the darkness to see the vessel, and then exerted herself to be polite.

"Do you know," he said, "you're awfully like a girl I used to know—only, of

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course, you're a lady and she wasn't. She was a hopper."

"A hopper!" Carol conjured up visions of railway termini crowded with families of dirty women and children bound for Kent.

"Yes, she hopped on a wire rope. Broke her leg at last—she was only twenty-three. It killed her, when they amputated. She had a saucy little way like yours."

"I hope," said Carol, as she went towards the saloon, "that I have not a 'saucy little way.'"

As she ran down the companion she nearly fell over Captain Fairs, who was waiting for her on the stairs.

"Good-bye to Mr. M. to-morrow," she said in a dejected tone.

She laughed.

"I shan't cry," she replied. Goodnight."

"Goodnight," he echoed, "and, Miss Medenham—don't pack your best hat."

* * * * *

The night was intensely hot. At twelve o'clock a sea got up, and the ports were closed. Many of the men slept on deck. Mrs. Lake and Carol could not endure the heat of their cabins, and they emerged together into the alley-way in search of a cool place. A faint current of air fanned their faces, and they hurried forward to the hatch. Joy! Above them was the starry sky; a

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gentle wind blew down ; a damp spray fell upon them.

"We must sleep here," decided Mrs. Lake, and she rang the bell for the steward.

In a few minutes their beds were placed in the hatch ; a tarpaulin was rigged to keep off the spray ; and they lay side by side, cool and comfortable.

"It is just like the lions in the Zoo," laughed Mrs. Lake ; "bars in front of us and the sky above."

They slept but poorly, and at the first streak of dawn they sprang up, just as the dark face of a Lascar appeared above them. They hurried back to their cabins, and some hours later amused Captain Fairs with an account of their adventures. Colonel Shore declared that he had seen them and had photographed them early in the morning. Carol said she did not mind as she had had her best night-dress on ; and she paid him back in his own coin by informing the assembled company that, when she was going to breakfast, she had encountered the Colonel dressed in pale blue pyjamas and a panama, and that he in his confusion had taken off his hat and bowed to her !

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CHAPTER IV

ADEN AND AFTER

“Unborn to-morrow, and dead yesterday,
Why fret about them if to-day be sweet !”
OMAR KHAYYAM.

THE “Lulia” was approaching Aden ; the merry party would soon be broken up.

“I expect,” said Captain Fairs to Carol as they sat at lunch, “that you will go to some dances in Simla. I hope I may manage to be there too.”

“At some of the dances in Simla,” put in Colonel Shore, “they have capital sitting-out places, arranged on an ingenious plan. They are like little cabins and are only large enough to hold two chairs. Some are dark and some are lighted up. The naughty people make for the dark ones, and when they sit down the lights spring up. The good people are also deceived.”

“But,” said Carol, quite without forethought, “when you had done that once you would know, and would make straightway for the light cabins !”

There was a burst of laughter.

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"I shall certainly arrange to go with you, Miss Medenham," said Captain Fairs. "You evidently know a good thing when you see it."

Carol calmly ignored him and turned to a little dark Anglo-Indian lady who sat opposite.

"You like Simla very much, don't you?" she asked quickly.

"It is my favourite place in the whole world," was the reply, and a reminiscent smile parted the little lady's lips. "You will know when you get there what scenic beauty really is."

"You must take a parrot home from Simla, Miss Medenham," said the Colonel, "they talk splendidly. A man I knew had one that said everything. But that bird spoiled his life."

"Why?" asked everybody in chorus.

"His wife went home one year leaving him in Simla. When she returned the first thing the parrot said to her was: 'Mrs. Adams—Lola darling—do you love me?' Now her name was Mary Smith."

"Rather awkward!" said Captain Fairs.

"Very," agreed the Colonel. "The man immediately set the parrot loose, and after a scene with his wife and a reconciliation took her away for a change. When they came back they were walking one day in the woods round Jakko. Suddenly a chorus of

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parrots yelled out, 'Mrs. Adams—Lola darling—do you love me?' Eventually they had to leave Simla."

"That was the man," said the little Major, "who, when he went out to fight, commended his soul to God and his wife to the nation."

"Fortunately, he returned," added the Colonel solemnly.

* * * * *

"Come and see the bullion got out," said Captain Fairs to Carol. "We have half-an-hour and we can't talk here."

"I don't personally feel afflicted with dumbness," she replied, "but still—if you like," and they went up on deck together.

"Now is the sad good-bye," said Carol, with a roguish smile.

"There you're mistaken," he replied.

"What do you mean?" she asked quickly.

"I'm coming too." He paused, and looked searchingly into her face. "I oughtn't to, I know, but I just can't help it. You don't seem very glad," he added in a disappointed voice.

Carol's face wore an expression of mingled uneasiness and pleasure.

"Look, there is Aden!" he said quickly, to relieve the tension of the moment.

"What a fearsome place!" Carol replied. "Fancy living there! Let us come forward and look at it."

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They joined the others forward of the Captain's cabin and leant over the rail.

Carol turned to Mrs. Lake. "How blue the sea is!" she exclaimed.

"Like your eyes," murmured Captain Fairs from behind her.

The Bay of Aden came into full view.

High up on the hill-slopes they could see the guns—grey, menacing, aggressive. Lower down, the Governor's bungalow nestled in a green oasis. Several smaller bungalows were perched on the hill; and on the crescent-shaped front could be seen the hotels, some shops, the club and a few scattered bungalows. A stately camel, a smart victoria, and a bullock-wagon jostled each other in the road. The sea was black with boats, crowded with naked figures—figures that bore so strong a resemblance to bronze statues that Carol had to rub her eyes to make sure that she was not dreaming. In one boat an aboriginal with long fluffy hair dyed tow colour sat among a group of swarthy Somalis; in another, tiny dark-skinned boys fought and scrambled for pennies. Little launches scurried about, bearing Government officials to and fro.

The boat that was to carry many of her passengers away came alongside the "Lulia." There was a confused chorus of "good-byes."

"At last we have got away!" said Carol to Mrs. Lake, as the tender fussily proceeded

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on her way to the "Marulia." "I hate all those good-byes. It is absurd for people to look as sad as if they had known you all their lives."

"I don't think it is absurd. They have my deepest sympathy," retorted Captain Fairs.

"Many of the nicest people are coming with us," said Mrs. Lake cheerfully, "and we are still quite a merry little party, are we not?"

* * * * *

The "merry little party" approved highly of the "Marulia" a larger ship than the "Lulia," and Carol was in high spirits. Her content was slightly marred by finding that, through some mistake, a little American man, to whom she had not spoken on the "Lulia," had been put next to her at table. The Commander was on her other side, while Captain Fairs looked at her helplessly and pityingly from across the table. The American was said to have arrived on the ship at Tilbury with only a small handbag. His conversation proved as scanty as his luggage, for, when Carol broke the silence by asking him if he took mint sauce, he curtly replied, "No, never," and said not another word.

The Commander, on the other hand, was full of conversation and was, moreover, addicted to friendly dispute. He contrived to disagree with Carol to such an extent that

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Captain Fairs asked her, as he rejoined her on the way out of the saloon, what she and the Captain were quarrelling about.

"We weren't quarrelling," replied Carol with surprised eyes. "True argument is entirely different from quarrelling."

"Then come and argue with me alone," said Captain Fairs persuasively. "I want to talk to you about my bungalow."

Carol seated herself in a long chair on deck, and her companion drew another one up to her side.

"I think I shall not have much furniture," he said—"cane chairs and things, and bits of Indian embroidery."

"Yes, you can do a good deal with that stuff," she agreed.

"You must come and stay with us and help us," he went on. "You could stay all next winter and keep us alive. You could have a pony broken in for you by me—think of that!"

"It is a great inducement," laughed Carol. "But what would your wife say to having a visitor planted on her for six months."

"I shouldn't ask her. Do think it over. Do you care for races?"

"Yes—I like Sandown Park and Goodwood very much."

"Will you come to Aldershot Races if I am at home next January?"

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"Oh, I can't make engagements so far in advance," she said, smiling and getting up. "And now I am going to write letters."

"Oh, please wait a minute. I want to know just something else."

"Well?"

"I want to know if you will come to the club and dine with me on our first evening in Bombay?"

"And desert my aunt? Of course not—thank you all the same."

"I don't think he is safe to be trusted out with you alone," said the little Major, who was half asleep on her other side.

"He is engaged," Carol remarked seriously.

"But with oh, such a short memory," added Captain Fairs.

Carol got up. "I am going now," she announced, "so *au revoir*."

* * * * *

When Carol went out on deck after breakfast next morning she found that the wind, which had sprung up in the night, had dropped again, and that the sea had sunk to an oily calm. The heat was intense. The passengers were sitting about in their deck-chairs, listlessly turning the pages of novels or pretending to write letters. Only two people continued to be energetic—a gaunt maiden lady, who sewed industriously

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at some fancy-work, and Colonel Shore, who tramped round the deck for his usual morning exercise.

"Good-morning, Miss Medenham," he said, "I think you would be all the better for a walk."

"In this heat?" she asked incredulously.

"Just try," he urged, "you will feel much better afterwards."

So they paced off together.

The Colonel drew her attention to the flying-fish which were fluttering through the water in shoals. Then, as they walked, she began to ask him questions about the unrest in India.

"Do you believe there will be another mutiny?" she enquired.

The Colonel looked very serious. "It is a big subject. I do think the natives are getting insubordinate in the north. We always send our men to church with two rounds of ammunition on them. We have had our lesson, and I do not think that even if there were a rising it would reach very considerable dimensions. Still, I cannot help thinking, you know, that education and civilisation have had a very bad effect on the natives"—he paused—"made them discontented with their own womenfolk. They get spoilt in England and imagine—" he broke off. "Are you going to stay in India all the cold weather?"

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"No, we must get home in October," replied Carol. "We shall have been away six months."

"Well, what is six months?" he asked. "You have no particular reason for hurrying home, have you?"

"My mother will want to see me," answered Carol, "but I wish this lovely trip could last for ever."

"I hope you will come up and see me at Peshawar," said the Colonel.

"You must ask auntie," Carol replied. "But I fear we shan't have time."

"It is a very pretty place," he urged, "and I think you would like it. I shall ask Mrs. Lake to try and come."

"I am sure she will if you ask her," said Carol, with a smile.

"And how about you?" He bent to look into her face. "Wouldn't you if I asked you?"

"I am so contradictory by nature," she answered, with a light laugh. "If people want me to do one thing, I generally want to do another. Now, if you had said, 'Don't come to 'Pshaw'—or whatever the name is—I should have immediately become possessed with a wild longing to go.'"

"Then I shall order you to stay away," he said.

Then, as Captain Fairs came into view, he added: "Here comes your admirer-in-

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chief, so I suppose you will want to get rid of me ! ”

Carol demurred, but her face betrayed her.

“ Well, well, he is a good fellow, for all his light banter. I ought to know, as he was in my regiment. He gave up the army because he felt it was his duty to look after the family property when his father died. It was a great blow to him.”

He looked down at his companion's eager face, and a sudden thought seemed to strike him.

“ I suppose he has told you that he is engaged ? A designing Society girl has entrapped him, much to his mother's regret.”

As Captain Fairs came up to them, the Colonel changed his tone. “ I have been trying to persuade Miss Medenham,” he said, “ that it is better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave ! ”

“ I have not the slightest intention,” Carol replied, “ of being either ! ” And she turned with a smile to Captain Fairs. The Colonel pursued his walk alone.

“ I think,” said the Captain, “ I shall put in a week in Bombay. I have to get several things there.”

“ A week ! ” Carol echoed. “ Why, you could get all you wanted in a day ! ”

“ But I shall miss you so much,” he pleaded.

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"If you stay a week you will scarcely ever see me," she said. "We have simply shoals of invitations for Bombay."

"Partings are horrid things," he murmured pathetically, "especially when—"

"Especially when they are crooked," laughed Carol, looking at his hair. "Now don't be so—so 'boaty,' or I shan't talk to you any more."

* * * * *

The next day all was bustle and confusion. Carpets were pulled up below, boxes were unearthed, and everyone wore a preoccupied, distrait air. The voyage was at an end.

The little party of passengers felt a slight depression creeping over them as they sat down to their last dinner in the same company.

When the last goodnights had been said, Mrs. Lake and Carol went rather silently to their cabins, having given instructions to be called early that they might not miss the sight of the entrance to Bombay Harbour—claimed by many to be the finest, in the world.

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CHAPTER V

BOMBAY

"Winds of the world give answer: They are whimpering to
and fro,
And what should they know of England who only England
know?"

RUDYARD KIPLING.

AN English summer sky of tender blue, fading on the horizon to a pale grey haze—an English, dancing sea, blue and buoyant, with flecks of foamy white—little lighthouses looking almost like toys—a collection of grey islands—in the distance a group of white buildings, growing clearer every moment—could this, thought Carol, be India? But it was no English breeze that stole across the Bay—hot, foetid, and clammy, ruffling her hair into little ringlets, and causing her to sigh and glance apprehensively at the hazy shore, where the sun, even at this early hour of eight, was blazing down on all the housetops.

"It is very hot ashore," announced the lady who already knew her India. "Have you got a solar topee, Miss Medenham? If not," she added, with an air of authority, "you must get a 'Lady Curzon.'"

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Carol was meekly grateful for the advice.

"Now, look, do you see that huge white building?"

Carol strained her eyes in the direction indicated.

"That is your hotel, the Taj-Mahal—the best in India."

"I am going there too," said Colonel Shore.

"So am I," said Captain Fairs. Then he turned to Carol. "I say, may I sit at your table? Mrs. Lake has already invited the Colonel."

"Oh, I suppose so," she replied carelessly. "The tables are usually big enough for four." She turned away from him to ask: "What is that low white building, with a red roof?"

"The Yacht Club," was the reply; "the centre of gaiety in Bombay."

* * * * *

As the tender approached the Ballard Pier, Carol gazed eagerly at the crowd which thronged it. On the steps, naked coolies were swarming—some in brightly-hued turbans, but the majority bare-headed, apparently impervious to the heat. Among the crowd on the pier itself, servants stood awaiting their employers; as the boat drew alongside, first one and then another of the passengers recognised their own bearers, all salaaming vigorously.

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Carol, meanwhile, had caught sight of a tall, thin man, dark and clean-shaven, wearing an immaculate white suit, who was obviously studying all the passengers with a view to finding out some particular person.

"I believe it's Mr. Grey, father's friend!" exclaimed Carol. "He promised to meet us here."

She was soon proved to be right, for, as they landed, he came forward, welcomed and took possession of her and her aunt.

Carol parted with Captain Fairs, and followed Mr. Grey and Mrs. Lake through the customs. They were soon bowling along in their friend's private victoria towards the Taj-Mahal Hotel.

On this first drive through an Indian town, Carol and her aunt were filled with wonder and surprise. The keen, thrilling interest with which they watched each passing person and object never possessed them again. On the morrow all had become familiar. The women, in their sarees of red and blue, moving along the roadways laden like beasts of burden, aroused their admiration and pity. Carol eagerly asked Mr. Grey's opinion about the position of women in India.

"Ah! you must talk to my wife about that," he answered. "It's the one subject on which we don't agree, and it wouldn't be fair for me to prejudice you."

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"No, but do tell me. Isn't she sorry for them?"

"Why, yes. She runs a society out here which aims at giving the purdah ladies more culture by enabling them to meet together to discuss literature and art."

"How splendid! I always wanted to be with people who do things like that. Everybody is so dull at home."

Mr. Grey glanced with amusement at her enthusiastic young face.

"There is no fear of being dull here," he rejoined. "But I am afraid we give more time to frivolity than to good works! By the way, my wife is giving a tea-party for you at the Yacht Club this afternoon."

"The centre of gaiety in Bombay—so someone told me," said Carol delightedly. "What a good beginning!"

"And to-night there is a dance at your hotel. Shall you feel equal to it, do you think, in this heat?"

"Yes, I'm quite sure I shall," she replied. "I feel very hot now, certainly, but I believe I would dance even on red hot bricks."

"You won't be asked to do anything so uncomfortable as that," said Mr. Grey, smiling. "But here we are at the Taj-Mahal."

They said good-bye to Mr. Grey on the steps of the hotel, and thanked him warmly for giving them a welcome to India.

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The Bombay Yacht Club! How much has been written and said of it! How many love-scenes have been enacted under the shadow of the trees in its beautiful garden at the edge of the Bay! It is the meeting-place of all European Bombay, where man and maid, wife and widow, come together, as evening falls, for tea and gossip and slander, at that witching hour when the day meets the night, and the salt wind sweeps in from the sea, cool and fresh through all the hot season. Then shadows mingle, and the sun sinks in a glorious red flush, turning the dull, prosaic town into a roseate city of delight.

Mrs. Lake and Carol sat by Mrs. Grey's side at a tea-table at the edge of the garden, and they idly chatted with her and her other guests. Mrs. Grey proved to be a charming little woman, with bright dark eyes and carefully-dressed dark hair. Her rather conventional point of view accentuated Carol's youth and eagerness.

She told them all the gossip, pointing out several people and relating little stories about them, with no show of ill-will, but rather as if it were the recognised thing to do, to recount one's neighbour's delinquencies.

Many friends came and talked to her, and then moved off to other tables. Everybody in the club seemed to know everybody else, and there was an air of holiday and jollity about the whole proceeding.

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Captain Fairs came and paid his respects to Mrs. Grey. Then he leant over Carol's chair and asked her to admire his new suit. He looked like a fair school-boy, clad all in white.

"But the coat is too thin," objected Carol. "I can see your braces! You must really buy some white ones."

"I don't know if it will run to it," he replied. "This suit was twenty rupees, and I have ordered two more, and a dozen shirts, and some silk bananas, and—"

"Oh, look!" cried Carol. "There is Colonel Shore at the next table! Isn't it quite like the ship still?"

As she spoke, the Colonel silently lifted his tea-cup and drank her health. She bowed, with a laugh in her eyes.

"Do you know that there is a dance at the hotel to-night?" she said, turning to Captain Fairs.

"Really?" He looked incredulous. "In this heat? Well, if so, will you dance all the waltzes with me?"

"I have promised some to the Colonel," replied Carol, "otherwise I should have been charmed."

"It is madness to dance," put in Mrs. Grey, who had adopted the lazy langour of the Anglo-Indian. "I shall look on and criticize."

* * * * *

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"Her feet beneath her petticoat
Like little mice stole in and out,
As if they feared the light.
And oh ! she dances such a way
No sun upon an Easter day
Is half so fine a sight."

SUCKLING.

When they returned to the hotel, Carol eagerly dressed herself in her most becoming dance frock and hurried down to dinner. She found that Mrs. Lake and Colonel Shore were not yet there, but Captain Fairs was already in his place. He looked up, alert and smiling, as she joined him.

"I was afraid I was in for a solitary dinner," he said. "How late you are !"

"Not so late as my aunt and the Colonel, anyhow," she retorted. "I simply can't wait for them. I'm starving."

"We might be in our 'appy little 'ome, you and I, having dinner together, mightn't we ?" said her companion in a low voice.

"We might be," replied Carol, "but as a matter of fact, we are in a hotel awaiting the arrival of our friends. And here they are !"

"I suggest," said Mrs. Lake, as she took her place, "that, as we are leaving for Mahabaleshwar so soon, we might all go and see the Towers of Silence together to-morrow morning. Can you be up at seven, Captain Fairs ?"

"Far too early for him," laughed Carol.

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"To drive with you," said Captain Fairs, smiling at her, "I would get up at sunrise."

Mrs. Lake looked at him severely.

"You must not talk to my niece like that," she said. "I shall write to your fiancée."

He did not reply. Something very like a sigh escaped him.

"Oh! 'The Vision of Salomé!'" cried Carol, as they left the dining-room and the band made itself heard.

"My dance, I think?" said Captain Fairs. "I'm quite excited at the thought of dancing once more."

In that stuffy little room, with a bad floor and an indifferent band, they danced with more enjoyment than they had often experienced under ideal conditions—so great a charm has novelty.

When they returned to the lounge, they noticed two people who had evidently come in to the hotel just for the dance. The woman was quite forty, plain and faded, with mouse-coloured hair. The man looked a few years older, and was very fat and red-faced. They were gazing into each other's eyes, and were clearly oblivious of the spectators. His arm lay on the back of her chair, and his lips touched her hair as he spoke. Suddenly she turned her head, and they kissed.

Carol uttered an exclamation of astonish-

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ment at such behaviour in a public place. But Captain Fairs said he supposed it was India, and added that he himself felt very like that. Whereupon Carol suggested that they should go and dance again, and hurriedly led the way.

After the third waltz they returned again to the lounge. Colonel Shore came up to Carol immediately. "I want my dance now, please," he said, almost authoritatively. As he led her away, he added: "You know you really mustn't dance so much with that boy! He is falling in love with you and he is engaged!"

"Colonel Shore!" exclaimed Carol. "What right have you to dictate to me?"

"Perhaps some day I shall have a right," he answered quietly.

They did not speak during the dance. When it was over, he told her that he knew of a cool place. He led her down a pitch dark passage, bidding her not to be frightened, whereat she laughed scornfully. At the end of the passage was an open window. They sat on the ledge.

"Miss Medenham, do you like me?" he asked anxiously.

"Why yes," she answered. "A little."

"And your aunt?" he pursued.

"Oh yes, a great deal."

"Why do you always nod when you say

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things like that ? ” he asked, with a suddenly appreciative glance.

“ Don’t you like it ? ”

“ Yes, very much. So please don’t do it when we are alone, or I might claim the privilege of—”

“ Of an uncle ? ” interrupted Carol, with a mischievous smile, as she got up and led the way back.

Captain Fairs waylaid them as they entered the ballroom, and begged for the next dance. He looked rather sulky.

“ Where did you go with the Colonel,” he asked, when it was over, “ in between the dances ? ”

“ Would you really like to see ? ” asked Carol. “ You will be good ? Come along then.”

So she took him and shewed him, and whether he was good or no, and the rest of the acts that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of Carol Medenham ?

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CHAPTER VI

BOMBAY (*Second Part*)

"Then do with me whate'er you will
But kiss me ere we part."

ANON.

AMIDST the flowers and trees of beautiful Malabar Hill rise the Parsee Burial Towers, marring its loveliness. Vultures, with their raucous cries, circle round and round these "Towers of Silence," awaiting their fearful meal and making a bedlam of the glowing garden.

Through the entrance gates, early in the morning, drove the little party of four. They were unusually silent. The sight of the repulsive birds of prey had cast a gloom over them. The man at the gate salaamed. They drove on to the second gate, and the gharry-wallah motioned to them to descend. Still in silence they climbed the flight of steps and neared the chapel. A drone of voices from within arrested their attention. Some of the vultures hovered near expectantly. Carol ran up a few steps and peeped through the window. Immediately a voice sounded in her ear :

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"Has the mem-sahib a pass?"

"No."

"Then the mem-sahib must go."

The speaker had no sooner turned his back than Carol whispered to Captain Fairs :

"My camera, quick!"

She took a photograph.

Then they reluctantly descended the steps, followed by the coolie, who was gesticulating, talking, and shouting as only a native can.

Not till they were nearing home were they able to speak of anything but the terrible "Towers of Silence." Then Mrs. Lake invited Colonel Shore and Captain Fairs to a farewell tea-party on the following afternoon.

"I wish we were not going quite so soon to Mahabaleshwar," she went on, with her customary cheerfulness, "but what can't be cured must be endured, I always think, don't you? And we shall be going with you to Agra, Captain Fairs, in a week's time. And we shall meet Colonel Shore again before very long, I hope."

"Amen to that," said the Colonel fervently.

Captain Fairs turned to Carol.

"I shall write to you," he said in a low voice.

"Please don't," she replied, "I never answer letters."

"Very well then, I shall write to Mrs. Lake, and send my love to you."

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"I dare you to do that," she answered, laughing. "Oh, here's the hotel! Now for breakfast! Let's make a raid on porridge."

* * * * *

Next morning as Carol lay under her mosquito curtains in a blissful state between sleeping and waking, a "chit" was brought to her by a native servant. She opened it, wondering who could be writing to her in this land where as yet she was a stranger. It was from Captain Fairs asking her to go to the Elephanta Caves with him that morning. It ended, "Your devoted Anthony." She smiled at the boyish impetuosity of the note and stood tapping her bare foot on the floor while she considered.

"I have a friend on the battleship lying off here and he will take us in one of the boats," he had written. "Do say yes! You and I will slip off alone before the others are awake."

The idea appealed to Carol. The day was going to be very hot and she felt how delicious it would be to cross the sparkling waves to the island of Elephanta in the comparative cool of the early morning.

She scribbled an acceptance and put her reply and a coin into the waiting bearer's hand.

It was barely seven o'clock when she reached the hall of the hotel. She found

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Captain Fairs awaiting her, clad in a spotlessly white suit. She had left a note for her aunt, and they set forth together full of pleasure in the perfect morning and in each other's society.

The launch awaited them at the Apollo Bunder Pier and they were soon speeding along and chatting to the young naval officer who was their pilot for the occasion.

He was rather an embarrassing young man and seemed to take it for granted that Carol and Captain Fairs were engaged or at any rate on the way thereto. After several sly allusions to his awkward position as third person, he bent forward and said to Carol, who had vainly tried to change the subject :

"And when is the happy event to take place?"

Almost as he spoke he was obliged to give the order to the engineer to "Slow her," and then to "Stop her," and they ran in beside the pier of Elephanta before Carol had time to reply.

She found a dhoolie awaiting her. Four sturdy coolies raised it to the level of their shoulders and set off up the hill. Captain Fairs walked at her side, unusually silent.

At the top of the hill Carol alighted from her chair, and they entered the Great Cave. They were confronted by the colossal Trimurti, the threefold bust of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.

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The light was dim and grey. Carol and her companion unconsciously talked in hushed voices as if they were in church. They gazed at the gigantic columns which support the low cave.

Then they made their way to the Tiger Cave and sat down on the topmost step at the entrance. On either side of them rose the great stone tigers.

"Not much like London," remarked Captain Fairs.

"Isn't it a marvellous place!" Carol exclaimed. "And doesn't it seem like a dream for you and me to be sitting here in these horribly modern clothes on a step that was carved thousands of years before we were thought of?"

"It suits you." Captain Fairs looked at her admiringly. "Your wonderful fairness against the dusky greyness. Miss Melenham," he went on, "I'm glad you came with me this morning because I want to tell you something."

She lifted a warning finger.

"Oh, I'm not going to make love to you," he told her, getting up and leaning on one of the tigers, his good-looking sunny face clouded as if by some disturbing thought. "I realise that I'm booked and there's an end of it. And I don't want to flirt with you. I care for you far too much for that. I only want to thank you for all you have done for

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me this trip. You have shown me how jolly and sweet a comrade a woman can be and yet be straight. I confess I had, till I met you, a pretty poor opinion of women, and imagined that they were always either rather rapid or dull prigs. And I want to tell you that I shall never forget you and you will always be—well, somewhere up there in my thoughts.”

Two big tears formed under Carol's lashes. She winked them away, and smiled up at him.

“Pull me up and race me to the dhoolie,” she said gaily, “and—Captain Fairs—I just love you for that little speech.”

She ran off as lightly as a child, closely followed by the Captain.

All the way back Carol chattered merrily to the naval officer, while Captain Fairs sat looking gloomily into the water. As they drew near the Apollo Bunder Pier he laid his hand on her sleeve.

“You will come to breakfast at the Yacht Club, won't you?” he begged. “I have ordered iced mangoes.”

“Then I can't refuse.” Carol looked at the young naval officer. “Are you coming too?” she enquired.

But he shook his head as he bade her good-bye.

“No such luck, Miss Medenham. Stern duty calls.” He saluted her as she stepped

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ashore. "Ask me to the wedding," she heard him say as the launch went astern.

* * * * *

That afternoon, after the farewell tea-party, Mrs. Lake and Carol were whirled away in a ticca gharry in the direction of the railway-station. Colonel Shore and Captain Fairs stood waving at the hotel entrance till the carriage was out of sight.

"And when we come back to Bombay," said Carol pensively, "they will both have gone away."

"Never mind," replied Mrs. Lake. "The Colonel means to meet us again, I know. And your Captain Fairs threw me a kiss!" She laughed. "I shall live on that till I see him again."

"What is that?" said Carol. "A kiss in the distance!"

Mrs. Lake looked thoughtful.

"So you had previously said good-bye," she murmured with a little slow smile.

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CHAPTER VII

MAHABALESHWAR

"I saw a village in the hills, as silent as a dream,
Nought stirring but the summer sound of a merry mountain
stream :
The evening star just smiled from heaven, with its quiet
silver eye,
And the chestnut woods were still and calm, beneath the
deepening sky."

DOYLE.

Up through the long dusty roads that lead from Poona to Mahabaleshwar climbed a motor-car. Side by side on the back seat sat Mrs. Lake and Carol Medenham. They were both weary after the railway-journey from Bombay, and they had been glad to see the car awaiting them under the shade of the magnificent gold mohur-tree which beautifies the corrugated iron-shed dignified by the name of Poona Station.

As they neared the Khandalla Ghats, the hot blasts of air grew fewer, and were replaced by fresh breezes. They leant forward, eagerly breathing in the cool breath of the hills. They had left behind all the heat and turmoil of the plains. Before them lay health and strength and vigour. They passed the sentries standing stiffly to attention, dashed through a tropical village, and drew up at

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the place beyond which no motor-car may pass. There they climbed into a gharry which was to convey them to the Hotel Dijon.

Through cool lanes, under the arching branches of the trees they drove, and a sudden sense of depression crept over Carol. She had been so gay in Bombay, and the isolation and silence of the hills seemed almost awe-inspiring. As she got out of the gharry and entered the hotel, she gave a little shiver. The sight of her bare white-washed room, very lofty, very narrow, did not tend to cheer her. Soon darkness fell, and the hills faded away into mysterious purple shadows.

Little smoky oil lamps were brought into the rooms, and with them came an invitation from the Governor. Mrs. Lake and her niece were requested to dine at Government House that evening. Carol's spirits rose immediately, and the invitation was gladly accepted.

After dressing under difficulties, in semi-darkness, they stood in the cool scented Indian night, awaiting their conveyance.

In the distance the hills loomed, grey and shadowy. A little light breeze stirred the trees. A silence, intense and brooding, enveloped them. It seemed almost a desecration when the carriage came noisily down the road, crunching the sharp stones, and when the boy pulled up the horses with a shout.

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They found, much to Carol's disappointment, that the dinner-party was given entirely in their honour; no other guests were there. An air of chilly formality hung over the whole proceeding. The Governor, who took in Mrs. Lake, evidently felt that it was not in keeping with the dignity of his position to unbend too much. Mrs. Lake's cheery optimism deserted her after a while, and she contented herself with briefly replying to his stilted questions. Carol experienced the trial of being taken into dinner by the "man with a hobby." Her partner, one of the *aide-de-camps*, was an enthusiastic amateur gardener, and he at once began explaining to her with elaborate detail the proper method of transplanting a laburnum tree.

After a few minutes Carol mildly interposed that she had no intention of ever doing such a thing. But he took no notice, and insisted on describing exactly how she must treat the root and soil. Carol gave up the case as hopeless, and unconsciously amused the man on her other side by her expression of helpless boredom.

Her partner continued his explanations all through dinner, and, when the ladies got up to leave the table, he even followed her to the door repeating, as if the subject were of first importance: "Don't forget! Six feet of earth!"

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The rest of the evening was scarcely more enjoyable. The staff made obvious attempts at joviality ; the Governor half-patronisingly discussed their tour. Rather early they took their leave.

"Oh, dear !" said Carol, when they were well on their way to the hotel, "I hope it isn't ungrateful, but that formal dinner-party has depressed me dreadfully ! How different from Bombay !"

"Are you sure, dear, that it is only Bombay you are missing?" asked Mrs. Lake.

But Carol did not answer.

Next evening, as they were walking in the compound of the hotel, they noticed a weary-looking mother with three white-faced little boys. She was alternately abusing the ayah, who carried the youngest child, and chiding the English nurse. Occasionally a pale smile crossed her face as the eldest boy said something amusing, but all the children were fretful and continually whimpering. As they were all hurried off to bed sobbing, Carol sat down, with a deep sigh, on the low wall that fenced the compound.

"It seems to me, auntie," she said sadly, "that things are depressing in Mahabaleshwar ! That poor woman with her large family !"

"Oh, Carol, Carol !" laughed Mrs. Lake. "It is easy to see that your heart is

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elsewhere. I am almost tempted to wish"—she suddenly looked grave—"that Captain Fairs were not already engaged, or that you were not going to see him again!"

For the second time Carol could not answer.

* * * * *

"Back to Bombay! Back to the plain, to the town, to the heat, to the bustle and joyous clatter of the world, to the clang of the electric tram! Farewell to hillsides! Farewell to loneliness! Back, back to the plains!" So sang the car, and Carol's spirits rose as mile by mile they neared the city and the blasting heat. It was a hundred and five degrees in the shade at Poona, and there was a dry, shrivelling wind, but she ate her tiffin and joked and smiled once more.

Back to Bombay! To the city that had opened welcoming arms to them on their arrival, that had made them, as it were, one with the vast family which peoples the land of India—the family of the exiled European!

So thought Carol, and the feeling of coming "home" was intensified by a letter, which Mrs. Lake found awaiting her from Captain Fairs, promising to start with them for Agra on the morrow—a letter which he dared to end with the message: "My love to Miss Medenham!"

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CHAPTER VIII

FROM BOMBAY TO AGRA

“Softly the Indian night sinks on the plains
At full moon in the month of Chaitra Shud
When mangoes redden, and the Asoka buds
Sweeten the breeze and Rama’s birthday comes
And all the fields are glad and all the towns.”

LIGHT OF ASIA. Book 4th.

THE train slid out of Victoria Station, Bombay.

Carol sat on one of the long broad seats of the carriage she was to share with Mrs. Lake. She pressed her face against the glass and smiled her farewells to the little group of their acquaintances who were waving on the platform. The lights of the station faded away. The train ran between low-lying fields dimly visible in the deepening night.

Canjee, their native servant, came in to make up the beds. Gay pink chintz coverlets and rose-coloured pillows were spread invitingly on the broad seats. An ice chest containing mineral waters and big red bananas stood in the adjoining bathroom. An electric fan whirled in the roof. Canjee unpacked the bags, and laid out the ladies’ night attire,

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then withdrew silently to the men's carriage next door, where Captain Fairs was to sleep.

Carol felt as excited as a child as she slipped into her frilly white night-gown and snuggled down on the wadded quilt that was laid over the leather cushions of the seat. She felt as if she were embarking on an adventurous journey in quest of romance and her heart thumped in her side as the subtle sweet aroma of the wet Khus-Khus above her head was wafted to her by the swiftly revolving fan.

She wondered what this journey would bring to her. She felt as if she were a princess setting out to seek her fortune in an enchanted land.

From the next carriage Captain Fairs shouted a cheery good-night. Then silence fell.

* * * * *

Late the next afternoon Agra was reached. They alighted from the train with alacrity after the enforced idleness of the journey, crossed a very wide, very sunny, unthinkably dusty platform, passed through a waiting-room hung with English advertisements, and got into an ekka, a quaint little hooded cart, drawn by a screw of a horse, all bones and no flesh. They drove at a jog-trot over a road full of deep holes and ruts, with mud dwellings on either side of it. A slim Indian maiden, standing by a well in an attitude of

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unconscious grace, her clay vase balanced on her hip, turned her head to gaze at the newcomers. By the time they reached the hotel, a long one-storeyed building, standing in a green compound, evening was upon them. The sun had set with astonishing rapidity, leaving for the fraction of a second a reddish-purple stain on the horizon. The sky looked deeply, darkly blue, and was set with hundreds of twinkling stars—surely, thought Carol, three times as large as the stars that twinkle at home. A pale moon shone on the white walls of the hotel, making them gleam like marble.

Under the verandah they passed a very old and toothless crone huddled up in a piece of dark red cotton material, that left her brown and bony legs exposed. She held a punkah-rope, which came through a hole from the room within. She politely beckoned to Carol to enter at the open window. Carol did so, and found herself in a small bare apartment with whitewashed walls, containing a tiny chest of drawers and a narrow iron bedstead, over which the punkah slowly moved. In a little anteroom the bath—a galvanised iron tub—was set, and from thence a somewhat insecure door led to the open air.

She could hear her aunt moving about in the next room and, further on, Captain Fairs expostulating with the manager because dinner was not ready.

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Carol went over to the French window that led on to the verandah, and looked out at the little green compound, full of cacti and prickly pears—those curious, unfamiliar tropical plants. A drove of heavy-eyed and patient bullocks passed on the other side of the hedge, pursued by a shrieking boy, stick in hand. An open landau followed, in a whirl of dust. A big camel strode along, rolling his pale eyes, his back laden with canvas sacks of great size. In the distance she could hear the insistent steady beating of a tom-tom. Suddenly a little dark shadow at her feet uncurled, resolving itself into a tiny boy, his white teeth gleaming, his little arm waving in the direction of the sound. “Wed-ding, missy-sahib!” he said with great distinctness. Carol smiled down at him, and then stood listening again, entranced. The strange, sweet scent of some tropical flower filled the air. At last this was India—the India of her dreams—mystic, incomprehensible, remote!

Bombay had merely impressed her as a large and rather handsome European city. Only the natives and the native-quarter had really interested her. But this! This was different. The mystery and silence and poetry of India were here. The cry of a box-wallah, melancholy and strange, rang out on the night air, and from the verdant compound went up the chirp of the grasshopper,

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the bark of the bull frog, the shrill cry of the peacock.

As Carol stood there, absorbed, Captain Fairs suddenly appeared.

"Allow me to take you in to dinner," he said cheerfully, and the spell was broken.

* * * * *

"Shall we go together to the Taj to-night, Miss Medenham?" Captain Fairs asked during dinner. "There is a full moon!" He leant over the table towards her. "May we, Mrs. Lake?"

"Not without me," Mrs. Lake replied, smiling a little, "but—I shall be delighted to accompany you."

The moon was up when the carriage came round—a big, English-looking landau. Captain Fairs handed in the two ladies, sat down facing Carol, and gazed at her with a rapt absorption that amused Mrs. Lake. It was a night for lovers, for joy and peace. A soft, warm breeze stirred the stephanotis blooms on the garden walls, and wafted the witching perfume to them as they drove along.

Suddenly they saw the Taj, gleaming elusively through the trees. Carol drew in her breath, and sat up with a sudden straightening of her slim young frame.

At a bend in the road Captain Fairs turned and pointed out the gateway. A horde of men endeavouring to dispose of

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little garish models of the famous tomb ran beside the carriage. It drew up with a jerk. They got out. Captain Fairs laid his hand on Carol's arm. "Come, let us explore the Garden of Enchantment!"

Once through the gateway they seemed to have entered another world. The hush was intense, the peace of that quiet garden indescribable. Between an avenue of Italian cypresses a little stream, throwing up a single line of fountains, gleamed silvery in the moonlight.

Carol walked a little ahead of the other two, her eyes full of dreams, her lips parted in a tender smile. The guide, voluble and eager, walked at her side, explaining and pointing, but she did not heed him. She only realised that not all this talking, not all she had ever read could possibly explain the wonderful charm of this, the most beautiful place in the world. Surely the love that had given birth to it was somehow interwoven into every stone of the building. When she heard the guide's raucous voice telling her of the thousands of lives that had been sacrificed to the erection of the tomb, she tried not to listen. She could not bear any jarring note. She almost dreaded lest her aunt or Captain Fairs should say something that would disturb the hush and solemnity of the perfect night.

When they had entered the building, she

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stood apart in the grey, subdued light, looking down with wet eyes on the tombs of the little lady of the Taj and her lover, on the wonderful patterns of roses, lilies, and fruits inlaid in precious stones. Then they followed the guide below to a place of sweet-smelling shadows where were the real tombs. Out of the gloom a hand was stretched, offering to Carol and Mrs. Lake blooms of waxy exotics. Then they emerged into the garden once more, through the doorway of marble, carved by a master-hand, and looking, to the uninitiated, light as lace and frail as gossamer. Into the glittering moonlight they emerged, and while Mrs. Lake sank down to rest, Carol and Captain Fairs strolled on and climbed one of the corner towers.

Far off, the river Jumna lay, like a silver riband shining in the moonbeams. On her opposite shore the Jasmine Tower reared itself, out of the windows of which Akbar had gazed, a prisoner, on the monument he had erected to the sweetheart of his youth, and gazing, had died!

"That was love!" Captain Fairs suddenly remarked from his place at Carol's side. "Solid, enduring love, that is out of fashion nowadays. It is becoming quite bad form to be seen about with one's wife."

Carol did not answer.

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"It is the right thing to be seen about with one's neighbour's wife," Captain Fairs went on. "I wonder—I wonder if I shall covet my neighbour's wife when I have a wife of my own!"

Carol looked at him reproachfully.

"Carol, I wonder whom you will marry?"

Neither noticed that for the first time in their acquaintance he had used her Christian name. It fell so naturally from his lips. Carol drooped her head and answered quickly, "I have never met him yet."

There was a sudden silence, a silence charged with meaning.

Captain Fairs got up. Carol did not stir. He held out his hand. "Come, your aunt will wonder where we are."

Down they went into the fragrant garden below, and at the foot of the steps they paused.

In Carol's hand was a little spray of jasmine. Captain Fairs touched it lightly. "Will you give that to me?" he begged very softly. "I should like to keep it in remembrance of this night—this hour."

She mutely offered the flower. He bent and gently kissed her finger-tips.

Like a flash Carol left his side and he, with a little smile, took out his pocket-book and placed the flower within, next to the pictured face of the girl he had promised to marry.

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CHAPTER IX

FATEPHUR SIKRI

"Think, in this battered Caravanserai,
Whose doorways are alternate night and day,
How Sultan after Sultan with his pomp,
Abode his hour or two and went his way."

Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.

"FATEPHUR SIKRI stands on a hill some little way from Agra. It is a deserted city, yet the forms of the buildings are intact."

So Captain Fairs read in a loud voice from his guide-book.

"Miss Medenham, are you listening?"

He leant back to look at the two ladies from his seat in the front of the motor-car. It was barely six o'clock, and the day was, so far, only pleasantly warm. The car, a fussy little thing of one cylinder, induced a cooling breeze as it bumped them over the roads to Fatephur Sikri. Carol looked sleepily at Captain Fairs from under her eyelashes.

"Say it again," she demanded, with a little yawn.

Mrs. Lake was frankly inattentive. "I couldn't sleep all night because of the heat," she complained, "and now, when it is cool,

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I daren't sleep for fear of having my neck broken! But I suppose we shall all the more appreciate the cool nights in Simla, don't you?"

"I couldn't sleep," Captain Fairs remarked, looking straight at Carol. "Could you?"

Carol blushed. "I was very hot," she murmured.

"And I—was thinking," he responded.

As he spoke, the car drew up at the gateway of the royal palace, bringing an aggressive bustle of modernity into the silence and antiquity of the city.

Guide-book in hand, Captain Fairs led his little party to see the famous Pachisi-board, where Akbar, the Emperor, was wont to play with slave-girls as his pawns. Carol shuddered as she thought of the long hours in which the poor girls had been exposed to the fierce rays of the sun, simply to give pleasure to a despot.

"But, dear, I expect they enjoyed it," Mrs. Lake said consolingly. "They probably felt proud of being chosen to amuse a king."

Carol smiled and shook her head, as they walked away to the beautiful rooms where Akbar kept his Portuguese wife. She fell into raptures at the sight of the frescoes, still intact, which were painted for the queen's pleasure.

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Captain Fairs watched her as she stood there in the midst of that garish decoration ; she looked so fair, so sweet, so unattainable. He bit his lip.

"It doesn't suit you, Miss Medenham," he remarked, rather gruffly. "I picture you in a setting of chintz and roses in an ideal English home."

Carol slid her arm through Mrs. Lake's, and threw a laughing glance at him over her shoulder.

"Is that a compliment?" she asked.

They crossed the courtyard to the royal nurseries, little changed since the days when tiny feet pattered over the stones, and little faces peered over the dangerously low parapets of the balconies. Mrs. Lake stood looking in silence for a moment or two. Then, "I'm afraid," she sighed, "that a regiment of nurses could not prevent accidents there, could they, Carol?"

Carol agreed, smiling at her aunt's unusual gloom, as they went into the Turkish queen's house, sombre and stately. Next door the prime minister's daughter had lived in a house built especially for her—a lady who had evidently enjoyed royal favour.

"Possibly the king wanted to please the prime minister, not the daughter," suggested Mrs. Lake. "One has heard of such things, even nowadays."

Carol did not answer. She was absorbed

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in gazing at the tomb of Shaik Salim Chisti, the famous saint, gleaming whitely in the sunshine. Everywhere, as they went, fresh beauties revealed themselves.

“To think,” exclaimed Carol, “that, merely for a whim, so lovely a place should have been deserted!”

As they journeyed back to Agra she looked wistfully behind her. In the sunlight, on the hill, Fatephur Sikri gleamed red, triumphant, a city of glorious memories.

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CHAPTER X

SIMLA

“My life with thee
Is like a song, and the sweet music thou,
Which doth accompany it.”

BAILEY.

CAROL and her aunt sat facing each other in the little train that climbs from Kalka up to Simla. Their clothes, their veils, and their faces were thickly plastered with smuts; the heat and the flies were almost unbearable. At every small station, too, the train waited so long that engine-drivers and station-masters had time, thought Carol, to enquire after the health of all the members of their respective families. She was impatient of the delay, for they had been separated for some days from their gay companion, and were to meet him again in Simla. At last the station loomed in sight, radiant with flowers, cool, inviting.

A *chupprassi* had been despatched by some friends to meet them. He packed them into rickshaws, and they were soon on their way to the Corstorphans Hotel. The rickety old conveyances bumped them un-

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mercifully over the rough road, but they had never ridden in rickshaws before, and they were enchanted. Later on, they grew more particular and always demanded rubber tyres.

They were stared out of countenance all the way up to their hotel. Simla is nothing if not curious. Who were the new-comers?

At last they reached the hotel, which is perched on the hillside, in its green and flowery compound.

Seven flights of stairs and never a lift! But what a view was to be had from the top windows! Far below was the valley, shadowy and green, dotted with little villages, looking in the dim distance like groups of toy-houses. All around were the mountains—green, grey, yellow, and purple, mist-encircled, vague, mysterious. Beyond all were the snows, and off the snows an English breeze was blowing—clean, cool and invigorating.

To the proprietor, who stood apologising for the number of stairs to be scaled, Mrs. Lake turned smiling.

“It is well worth the climb,” she said, “when one can get such a view.”

When, two hours later, cool and refreshed, they sat down to tiffin, they felt that the world, and especially that part of it which is called Simla, was a very pleasant place.

As Carol strolled out into the compound after tiffin she was greeted by a glad cry :

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"Miss Medenham!" and turning, she saw Captain Fairs hurrying towards her with outstretched hands, his fair, boyish face beaming with smiles. Carol's spirits rose as she caught the disconcerting little twinkle in his eye.

"How I have missed you!" he went on plaintively. "Girls? They one and all bored me to extinction! Did you like Delhi? Come and sit down and tell me all about it. Do you know, you've lost your colour already! I ought to have stayed to take care of you!"

How cheering to hear the merry rattle of the well-known voice! Carol leant back in her chair and listened, well-pleased to be amused.

"What fun we are going to have together up here, aren't we?" he questioned with enjoyment.

"I hope so." Carol gave a little shy laugh. "Only, you mustn't—"

"Mustn't what?" He looked at her with teasing eyes.

"You mustn't make love to me. You are—"

"Well, what am I?"

She did not answer. Her eyes were fixed on the far hills.

"I suppose Mrs. Lake is taking you to the ball to-night," he said abruptly, "given by the bachelors of Simla."

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"Yes, I believe so," Carol replied.

"I am going too," he continued. "Shall we sup together?"

"-Why, with pleasure. I shall know nobody."

"Have you been told the meaning of their society?" he asked.

"Yes. Each man wears a locket containing the portrait of the girl who has refused him! What a quaint idea!" laughed Carol. "Poor Society of Blighted Bachelors!" she continued ruefully. "I hope they will not all confide their troubles to me."

* * * * *

That evening Mrs. Lake was sitting on a bench in the compound of the hotel, looking out to where the dim hills loomed darkly against the star-sprinkled sky. Hundreds of little lights twinkled restlessly on the slope below her. A faint scent of burning wood and the subtle aroma of pine-trees pleasantly perfumed the air. The evening breeze blew straight off the snow-mountains of Thibet, caressing her cheek with its delicious icy breath. A pile of letters lay on her lap. She had been reading them until the light faded. Now she sat motionless, dreaming—the dreams of middle-age, mainly retrospective—dreams that ended in a smile and a sigh as a footstep sounded on the gravel. Colonel Shore stood bare-headed before her.

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She sprang to her feet impulsively, scattering her letters right and left.

"How delightful to see you!" she exclaimed. "I pictured you miles away, hard at work in the service of your country!"

"It was kind of you, dear lady, to picture me anywhere," he replied gravely. "I arrived an hour ago, and came as soon as possible in search of you."

He bent and collected the letters, giving them back to her with a courtly bow.

Then, as they sat down, he added :

"I am anxiously hoping that you and your niece have decided to come to Peshawar."

"I fear we shan't have time," answered Mrs. Lake.

There was a little pause.

"Is it of any use my keeping on the bungalow?" he asked in a low voice, looking closely at her.

"That is for you to decide," said Mrs. Lake lightly. "Perhaps you are thinking of marrying again."

He bent forward eagerly. "Mrs. Lake," he began, but at that moment Carol's fresh young voice made itself heard, and they saw her coming towards them in the dim light.

"Why are you sitting out here in the dark, auntie?" she asked gaily. "Colonel Shore! When did you come? I am pleased to see you!"

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"I wonder if you know," said Captain Fairs to Carol as they mounted Jakko in rickshaws a day or two later, "what a sensation you caused at the dance the other night! All the bachelors decided to destroy the portraits in their lockets and go in for you! I wish I had the right to forbid them!"

Carol did not reply.

Colonel Shore was coming up the hill behind them on foot. He kept close to Mrs. Lake's rickshaw, humming under his breath his favourite song, "In the North Sea lived a Whale," and looking supremely happy.

"Oh! there are the monkeys!" cried Carol suddenly. They had reached their destination, and they all dismounted from their rickshaws.

Hundreds of monkeys, large and small, fierce and shy, chattered round them in the trees. Carol gave a little cry of dismay and shrank back in alarm. The jhampannies laughed at her discomfiture. The famous monkeys waited, watchful and alert, and presently rushed off in a body and formed a compact mass round a little wooden hut.

Presently the door opened, and a wild-eyed man, with long hair, walked out and scattered food. With shrieks and cries the monkeys surrounded him.

"That is the mad fakir who lives up

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here," Captain Fairs explained. "How would the life of a hermit suit me, Mrs. Lake?"

"Very badly," she replied laughing. "What would you do? I am sure you would not get on with the monkeys, and you don't care for reading."

"My only books are women's looks!" Captain Fairs quoted softly with a tender glance at Carol's averted face.

Carol moved away nearer to the monkeys and took up her kodak. A fiery-tempered mamma, fearing that injury was intended to her young, made one spring towards her and inflicted a bad scratch on her bare arm. An immense chattering and scrambling ensued, and the party were glad to quit such a pandemonium and to make their way down the mountain. The rickshaws had gone on ahead, and as they walked down under the arching branches no sound broke the stillness of the morning. Colonel Shore walked with Mrs. Lake, and from time to time he glanced admiringly at her sturdy well-knit figure and pleasant face. Her sparkling brown eyes still retained the hopeful look of youth. Hers was the face of a woman who had known sorrow, had known care, but had never thought ignoble thoughts nor harboured petty spite or jealousy. What an ideal companion, thought the Colonel, for the autumn-time of life!

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He broke the silence suddenly. "May I come to Benares with you when you leave here?"

Mrs. Lake looked at him with a dawning smile. "Why, of course," she said. "I only wish Captain Fairs could have come too. Then we should have made quite a merry party!"

He followed her into the hotel, a glad light in his keen eyes.

Carol ran up the stairs behind Mrs. Lake and slid an arm round her aunt's waist.

"Don't forget we are going out to tea, auntie!" she said. "No tiresome men-folk invited! It will be a relief to get rid of them, won't it? Isn't the Colonel an old dear? Why, auntie, you're blushing! Has he been making love to you?"

Then, without waiting to hear the indignant protest which she knew would follow, Carol ran into her room.

The tea-party to which they were invited was given in honour of a Rajah and Ranee. No men were to be present as the Ranee was "purdah." Elaborate preparations were made to protect her from the gaze of man. Mrs. Lake and Carol arrived in rickshaws. Their jhampannies were hastily dismissed by their hostess, and the three ladies sat down to await their guests.

When the Ranee entered the room Carol thought she was almost a child, so small and

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slight and fair did she appear. But on nearer inspection she looked far older. She was loaded with costly jewels, set rather clumsily in necklaces, bracelets, and rings, and was attired in pink gauze, gold-embroidered. Her saree was of flowered silk. She wore on her head a wreath of pink roses with gauzy veil attached, and was very proud of her pink cotton stockings and her European black-beaded slippers. Her husband was fat and ponderous, with a thick-lipped sensual face. He looked at his tiny wife with smiling pride.

The hostess, Mrs. Mountjoy, plied the Ranee with rich cakes and sweets, which she evidently enjoyed. After tea she was persuaded to play the piano and to sing. It was a pitiful exhibition. She struggled, with difficulty, through a five-finger exercise, and then, after seating herself behind a piano-leg, she moaned a little song in a tiny voice, while her fat husband beamed approval.

"The ladies, they have all the arts!" he exclaimed, when she had finished.

Carol and her aunt could hardly refrain from laughing, while Mrs. Mountjoy complimented the Ranee on her achievements and the Rajah on his accomplished wife.

When the little wife had made her adieux and tripped away in the wake of her portly husband, they were able to give way to their mirth.

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"The Rajah is a highly-educated man," Mrs. Mountjoy told them. "He has written a very able book in English on old India."

"Then how can he have anything in common with such a mass of imbecility as the little Ranee?" enquired Mrs. Lake.

"He prefers his wife to be foolish and her conversation to be inane and frivolous," Mrs. Mountjoy replied. "If he wants to talk on an equality with a woman and to be amused he engages a Nautch girl! His wife he treats as a doll fit only for displaying the jewels and finery he has lavished upon her! It works very well and the 'purdah' woman is quite happy! What is upsetting things is Western education. When the natives go to England and meet European women in society they begin to be dissatisfied with their own countrywomen and to covet intelligent wives."

Mrs. Lake got up. "Well, it has been a most interesting afternoon to me," she said, as she shook hands. "I have often wanted to meet a 'purdah' lady! Come, Carol, we have to dress and dine and get to the ball at Government House by nine."

"We may or may not meet again there," their hostess replied, "there is such a crowd!"

She walked out into the compound with her guests and saw them into their rickshaws. Then they were quickly whirled away into the rapidly approaching darkness.

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CHAPTER XI

BENARES

"Awake : for morning in the bowl of night
Has flung the stone that puts the stars to flight :
And lo ! the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultan's Turret in a noose of Light."

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM,

"Yet Brahmans rule Benares still . . ."

RUDYARD KIPLING.

THE waters of the Ganges showed grey and turbid under the steely skies that were as yet untinged by the flush of dawn.

At the foot of one of the Ghāts a boat rocked, and the boatmen chattered idly as they waited, watching the ever-lightening skies. Down the steps came the priests, followed by a seemingly endless procession of suppliants. Numberless dark-skinned children came running joyously to the water's edge and dipped their little hands into the sacred stream. A woman clad in an orange saree, her golden anklets clanking on the stones, came slowly downwards in the wake of a litter on which a sick man lay groaning.

The skies grew rosy above the temples, the minarets were dyed blood red, the waters reflected the tender blue above them and sparkled as the sun rose high and higher.

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The boatmen slipped off their wraps and stood erect as Carol Medenham, followed by her aunt and Colonel Shore, came quickly down the Ghât, her eyes half dazzled by the sudden brilliance, and stepped on board. The Colonel tenderly assisted Mrs. Lake, and the boat slowly slid down-stream, impelled by a long pole which the boatman deftly wielded.

The scene was wonderfully impressive. Hundreds of pilgrims stood waist-deep in the water, their faces turned towards the sun, their lips moving in urgent prayer. The childless wife, the love-sick maiden, the maimed, the crippled, and the dying mingled their supplications, throwing offerings of flowers, betel nuts and sweetmeats into the sacred stream. At the foot of the Ghâts and on the steps sat the fakirs, under mushroom-shaped umbrellas.

As the boat drifted on, they passed a group of naked boys, swimming like fish—lithe, active, and graceful.

They passed many temples and palaces glittering in the sunlight and presently reached the Burning Ghât, where a fearful sight met their eyes. On the lowest step lay a half-burnt corpse—the head half gone, the arms burnt away. It had been packed in an insufficient supply of wood. Mrs. Lake gasped with horror as Carol calmly photographed the scene.

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When they landed at one of the Ghāts the sun had become powerful and the golden roofs were shimmering under the fierce rays. The sellers of brass had opened their shops, and the bazaar was humming with the sounds of many voices. The harsh cries of the vendors of food rang out with startling distinctness in the clear air.

Mrs. Lake heaved a sigh of relief. After the gruesome sight at the Burning Ghāt this bustle of teeming humanity was distinctly cheering.

"Now for the temples!" she said as they climbed into the ponderous landau which awaited them. "Colonel Shore, I suppose you know all these places by heart!"

"Pretty well!" he admitted. "But"—gallantly—"I shall enjoy showing them to you."

They alighted first at the Monkey Temple and were at once surrounded by ragged and half-naked priests, begging for coins. In exchange for the coins the priests gave them food wherewith to tempt the monkeys to approach.

Carol, rendered nervous by her recent encounter with the monkey tribe in Simla, allowed Mrs. Lake and Colonel Shore to do all the feeding, and contented herself with looking on and laughing at the queer antics of the little creatures.

Just outside this indescribably filthy temple—which is circular in shape, with a covered

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corridor running round it where all kinds of animals disport themselves—Carol noticed a blood-stained stone block. Here, she was informed, a goat was sacrificed every week.

As they drove away a horde of naked children pursued their carriage, shouting, "Backsheesh! Backsheesh!"

In order to get a good view of the wonderful roof of the Golden Temple—which is overlaid with pure gold-leaf and shines in the sunlight like a ball of fire—they climbed into a house-opposite. They were followed up the dark and narrow stairway by a crowd of unkempt ruffianly-looking natives, who gesticulated and chattered vociferously. Colonel Shore felt a little nervous for the safety of his party. He knew so well how considerably in the power of these natives they were, and how much the unrest was spreading.

They descended to a street of such narrowness that the sun's rays never reach its pavement. Here, at the queer little shops, they made purchases of strange stuffed dolls and wooden animals. After a short walk they reached the Well of Knowledge, which emitted a powerful odour of decaying vegetation. It was littered all round with dead and dying flowers, and was half-filled with blossoms, thrown in as offerings to the god Shiva, the supposed inhabitant of the well.

Carol was much amused to see a rather dilapidated red clay cow, with a punkah over

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it. The punkah was being assiduously pulled by two small native boys. She was careful to suppress her smile, for she knew that the cow is regarded as sacred. Rather tired, but impressed with the beauty and charm of the city, they returned to the hotel for breakfast. During the meal Carol was very quiet, and directly they had finished she went up to her room, ostensibly to write letters.

Colonel Shore and Mrs. Lake sat together in the lounge, and contrived to keep fairly cool under a swinging punkah.

"Miss Carol has a headache, I fancy," said the Colonel presently.

"Or a heartache," Mrs. Lake added with a sigh.

"They are made for each other, those two," the Colonel remarked gravely. "Whatever induced Anthony Fairs to get himself engaged to a girl whose ideas don't soar above face-creams, flirtations, finery, and French novels, I can't imagine! If only he had met your niece before! I love that boy, and his inconsequent foolish chatter covers a multitude of virtues. And I love Miss Carol, but not quite so much as I love——"

Mrs. Lake got up hurriedly. "It is very hot here!" she said a little incoherently, and it may have been the heat that flushed her cheeks so suddenly. "And Carol will never forgive me if I don't rest a little while."

The Colonel walked with her to the stairs.

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"We are driving again later, you know," he reminded her. Then he stood still and watched her ascend and pass out of sight.

Late in the afternoon they drove out again to the farthest end of Benares city, and visited one of the native palaces where, in a drawing-room crudely furnished in red plush and bamboo, a musical box held the place of honour under a glass shade on a centre table. The gardens were gay with exotic blooms, fountains played in the paved courts, but squalid discomfort underlay the barbaric splendours of the palace. Mrs. Lake and Carol were utterly disillusioned when they visited the dark and dank looking sleeping apartments furnished, so the guide proudly announced, with real English bedsteads. On the way home Carol was silent and *distracte*. Mrs. Lake was somewhat wearied with sight-seeing, but she roused herself to a little laughing raillery at the expense of her niece.

"Why so sad?" she asked. "No letters? Is that it?"

"I had one to-day," Carol replied listlessly. "You may read it."

"I wouldn't for worlds!" laughed Mrs. Lake. "Who wrote it?"

"Captain Fairs," Carol answered, "and he is only existing till he joins us at Calcutta." Then she perforce laughed too.

"Is Tony Fairs going to Darjeeling with you?" enquired Colonel Shore.

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"No. But we only go to Darjeeling for a few days. Then we come back to Calcutta and he goes with us to Burma," Mrs. Lake replied. "And that will be very nice for Carol!"

As she spoke they reached the river and a scene of great beauty met their eyes. The setting sun had dyed the world blood-red—the temple towers, the mushroom-like umbrellas under which the Brahmins sat, the steps leading to the river's edge—all were bathed in crimson. Up the steps a fakir came, his eyes wild, his hair long, his body naked and smeared with chalk and ashes. A woman bent and kissed the place where his feet had fallen.

They watched in silence till the sun disappeared and a queer sudden wind got up and ruffled the water. The Indian women drew their sarees close, the boys came up from their bathing. Little lamps gleamed fitfully on the stalls of the sellers of brass.

Carol shivered. The life, the noise, the sparkle of the day was over. She suddenly realised what her life would be when someone who now coloured all her existence should have bade farewell to her for ever.

As they drove back to the hotel through the bazaar she sighed, half-glad, half-sorry, to think that on the morrow they would leave Benares, the wonderful sacred city, the Mecca of the East.

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CHAPTER XII

DARJEELING

"Dark green valley depths, and mountains zoned
With pine woods, singing in the infinite wind."
OLLIER.

MRS. LAKE and Carol turned their backs on the heat and varied smells of Calcutta without regret. While they were settling their luggage on the train that was to take them to Darjeeling, little trickles of perspiration were coursing down Mrs. Lake's cheeks, much to her discomfiture. Carol, flushed, but laughing, was powdering her nose.

On the platform sat a cool, amused man. He was evidently an Anglo-Indian, well accustomed to the climate. He had arrived at the station in good time, arranged his traps, and was now seated under a punkah surveying the world out of a pair of sleepy, twinkling blue eyes. Mrs. Lake's customary good-nature forsook her, and she was exceedingly annoyed.

"He is watching us, actually watching us and laughing!" she exclaimed. "Carol, how can you powder your nose when he is looking?"

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"I feel supremely indifferent," replied Carol. "If I afford him any amusement, I am glad. It doesn't cost me anything."

He was still more amused when Carol made a fruitless search for their dilatory bearer. Her temper was ruffled at last, and she directed an indignant glance at the man under the punkah.

At Damukdhia they left the train and walked along a sandy footpath to the ferry-boat. It was gay with lights, and a table was spread for dinner on deck. A search-light played on the bare shore which sloped to the river.

The lights, the talk, and the clatter, insensibly cheered the weary travellers. The "amused man" had taken the head of the table, and smiled broadly at Mrs. Lake and Carol as they went by. They looked severely past him, and walked in a dignified way to seats further down the table.

Dinner over, they sat in large deck-chairs. Still the "amused man" loomed in the foreground, a cigar in his mouth, his eyes still laughing and poking fun at the two ladies.

Once more they took the train, and all night they sped through the silent land under the stars, dreaming and waking.

At Silighuri they tumbled out, half-asleep, and, after breakfasting, got into the little train that was to take them to Darjeeling.

But who is this that invades their carriage?

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He of the laughing eyes, the "amused man." He got into conversation with Mrs. Lake, then he caught Carol's eye and made some trivial remark to her. The acquaintance was established.

He took possession of them at lunch, and looked after them attentively. And always his eyes wore that quaint, mocking little smile.

At last Darjeeling Station was reached.

"We are going to the Woodlands Hotel," announced Mrs. Lake.

"So am I," said the "amused man." Then he added, somewhat diffidently: "Would you mind if I sat at your table for meals?"

"We shall be delighted," replied Mrs. Lake graciously, "though you were so unkind as to laugh at us on the journey."

"Forgive me," he begged, "but you are not really angry. You have too strong a sense of humour not to know how funny you looked!"

They all laughed heartily, and the ice was quite broken.

As they climbed the hill to the Woodlands Hotel, their new friend went on: "I really ought to introduce myself. My name is Brandon, and I am an engineer. I have been in India for sixteen years. I cannot think of any other interesting fact about myself."

"Perhaps we shall discover something," answered Carol demurely.

They discovered, at any rate, that he was a most cheering companion. He was

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constantly with them, knocking them up early in the morning, chaffing them, and accompanying them on all their expeditions.

The first morning of their stay, very early, while the whole hotel still lay hushed in sleep, Carol stole cautiously across the verandah, and wandered down under the pine-trees till she reached the white and dusty road. A dark figure uncurled itself from the hedge, and began to recite verses from the Koran in a nasal, high-pitched tone. She started aside in alarm. A sturdy Thibetan woman strode past her, bearing a mighty load of wood on her head. Carol envied the ease and grace with which she carried so heavy a burden. Suddenly, above the dark pines, Kinchinjunga shone out, rosy-tipped by the rising sun. Carol caught her breath, as she watched this queen of mountains change from palest pink to deepest mauve, and thence to purest white. As she gazed, the clouds gathered and blotted out the wondrous vision.

A step sounded behind her, and Mr. Brandon stood at her side. "That's India, true India," he said, "the finest scenery we have to offer you. And if you want local colour—there it is, down there!" He waved his hand in the direction of the Bazaar, which was gradually awaking to the work and play of another day. The reek of the wood-fires came stealing up to them as

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they stood. They could hear the beat of the tom-toms, and the long-drawn cries of the insistent beggars. Very silently they climbed the hill to breakfast.

Later in the day they went to Le Bong, the ladies in rickshaws, Mr. Brandon on foot, through lanes scarcely wider than a goat-path and quite as rough, through woods so dense that the sunlight could not pierce them, past temples many and quaint, through villages, over sandy and unfrequented roads, and home through the native Bazaar. The shops were filled with fascinating curiosities and queer, barbaric jewellery. Mrs. Lake and Carol did much bargaining, with which Mr. Brandon helped them greatly.

Carol did not get back into her rickshaw, but walked through the Bazaar by Mr. Brandon's side. She was wearing a simple, grey tussore frock and a large white hat. Though the sun of India had robbed her of her colour, she looked very lovely. Her companion watched her with admiration.

"Do you know," he said suddenly, "why I called you Missy Baba at breakfast to-day?"

"I can't think," replied Carol. "You said it meant 'little girl,' and I am certainly not that."

"I will tell you," he said. "It was because of your laugh. It is the youngest, happiest laugh I have ever heard on a woman. It is just like a child's."

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The laugh came at that, but it was a little nervous.

"Perhaps you think I ought to suppress it, as I am not a child, but a woman?"

"No, please don't," he answered earnestly. "It is laughs like yours, and natures like yours, that keep the world young. Laugh while you can, and be quite sure that you have done some good, brightened some life, with your cheery philosophy."

"Well, I think we will catch up my aunt and brighten her life," said Carol, smiling, and climbing into her rickshaw. "Chalo!" she shouted to her boy, and he started off at a sharp trot.

"A penny for your thoughts!" she cried, as they caught up Mrs. Lake.

"I was thinking," her aunt admitted, "what an unsatisfactory place India must be for a man to live in. The perpetual separations are so dreadful. And to have to choose between husband and children is difficult for a woman, I always think, don't you?"

"The separations are a great problem, certainly," Mr. Brandon agreed, "but the charm of India is intense. If I had to choose over again, I should still choose India—the land of quick promotions and sudden deaths, of transient loves and bitter heartaches—this India, where emotions are quickly outlived, and where one season's doings are forgotten in the next."

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Mrs. Lake looked surprised at this outburst of eloquence. Then she asked : "Mr. Brandon, why don't you marry? You live in a nice place now, and I always think people are happier married, don't you?"

Mr. Brandon looked embarrassed, and glanced at Carol.

"Too poor," he said, after a short pause, smiling at Mrs. Lake, with a twinkle in his merry eyes. "Why, since I was appointed to Calcutta, I've spent all my screw on myself. Besides, nobody will have me. The women don't care for me. The Army have it all their own way in India. I asked Miss Medenham this morning if she could tell me why I am always refused, but she only laughed."

When they got back to the hotel, Mrs. Lake drew Carol aside. "What has made our 'amused man' so serious?" she enquired. "I saw you talking very earnestly on the way to Le Bong? What were you discussing?"

"Oh, marriage chiefly," replied Carol.

"His?" asked Mrs. Lake, a little anxiously.

She had begun to realise the difficulty of efficiently chaperoning so pretty a niece.

"Not only his," answered Carol.

"He surely was not discussing yours?"

"Oh no, not exactly. At least, he—I—" Carol hesitated and blushed.

"Of course not," said Mrs. Lake de-

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cidedly, determined to ignore such a possibility.

There was a slight pause.

Then Carol went on: "He was explaining to me his views on marrying a woman and condemning her to live in a dead-alive hole on a country railway, like the place where he spent five years."

"I am sorry he has not married," said her aunt, a little wistfully. Mrs. Lake liked everyone to marry. It was a hobby of hers.

At that moment, the subject of their discussion approached them.

"Are you coming to the Amusement Club, Miss Medenham? You promised to let me teach you squash-rackets."

"I should love to learn," answered Carol. "But we want you to come too, auntie. We must have an audience."

And Mr. Brandon had no opportunity of resuming the discussion he had begun on the way to Le Bong.

When their visit to Darjeeling was at an end, and the time had come for saying good-bye to the "amused man," Mrs. Lake felt really sorry for him. She could see that he noticed Carol's eagerness to start. "There is something rather sad," she sighed, as the train took them further and further away from him, "about these perpetual beginnings and endings of friendships. We are all just 'ships that pass in the night.'"

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CHAPTER XIII

BURMA

"For the temple bells are callin', an' it's there that I would
be—

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, looking lazy at the sea :
On the road to Mandalay——"

RUDYARD KIPLING.

WHEN they reached Calcutta, they found Captain Fairs joyfully awaiting them.

"It seems years since we parted in Simla!" he exclaimed, as he took possession of them and their belongings.

The crossing to Burma was rough, the cabin of the B.I. boat stuffy and malodorous. It was a weary trio that arrived at Rangoon.

"Do you think your friends will mind giving me breakfast too?" asked Captain Fairs as the tender approached the shore.

"I don't think they will absolutely refuse," Mrs. Lake answered, laughing.

"Why look!" cried Carol. "There is our bearer, waving to us from the ship! How stupid of him not to board the tender!"

"It is evidently decreed that I am not to eat that breakfast," said Captain Fairs, in a tone of resignation. "I must stay behind and retrieve Canjee, and, what is more

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important still, the luggage. If I don't, we shan't get on to Mandalay this morning."

So the waiting coolies took only Mrs. Lake and Carol to the house in Paradise Avenue, one of the loveliest roads in Rangoon.

Tropical flowers ran riot over the garden walls, and hung over the gateways in great brilliant bunches; giant magnolias bloomed in profusion; on either side, the road was lined with the radiant gold mohur trees.

The house itself was of peach-colour, and was enclosed in peach-coloured walls. Its compound was glorious with flowers. Here, in a cool, low room, which opened on to a wide verandah, they found breakfast prepared, the table sparkling with silver and glass, and dainty with freshly-arranged flowers:

Two hours later they arrived at the railway station.

"I hope you ate my share of the breakfast," said Captain Fairs with smiling good-nature. "I have had nothing but a ginger nut and a cup of indifferent tea."

Mrs. Lake and Carol felt quite apologetic till after the tiffin, which they procured at a station on the line to Mandalay.

All day the train ran between fields of rice. Men and women were working side by side, bare-legged, and ankle-deep, sometimes even knee-deep, in muddy water.

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Rain fell during most of the day, making the air refreshingly cooler.

In one corner of the saloon carriage Mrs. Lake slept peacefully. In another, Carol was hard at work writing her diary and eating mangosteens. Captain Fairs pretended to write letters, but his thoughts were with Carol.

The day wore away, and as evening fell they reached the pretty little station of Mandalay. As they stepped out of the train a quaint old native, in a European overcoat and a turban, came hurriedly forward and bowed politely.

"Salween House?" he said enquiringly.

Captain Fairs nodded, and they followed their ancient guide to a ramshackle old omnibus.

They drove through a wide and well-paved street flanked with shops—aggressively new and very hideous European buildings. Inside the shops they caught glimpses of the dainty Burma girl who smokes her big cigar and drives hard bargains, while her lazy spouse lounges in the doorway. Could this be Mandalay?—the Mandalay of Kipling with those "tinkly temple bells?" Surely no! They had dreamed of a beautiful place on a sunny river, a place of romance, shadowed by palm trees, with temples of marble and slender pagodas rearing themselves against an Eastern sky of deepest blue.

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In a few moments they understood why their first impression had been one of disappointment. They had entered Mandalay at the ugly end—the end near the railway station, which, with more enterprise than judgment, had been Europeanised. When the modernised bazaar had been left behind, a scene of real beauty presented itself.

They entered a wide and shady avenue of trees. On one side a little road led to the gateway of a small white temple, lovely in its cool simplicity. Then came a group of brown pagodas. Lounging against the woodwork of one of these were some priests in saffron-hued robes, with closely shaven heads, bearing in their hands bowls of food destined for the poor. A little further on they could see the hotel in its green compound, and the landlord standing at the door to greet them.

Next morning, at early dawn, the three set out to see the Arrycan Pagoda, which contains the great brass Buddha.

They approached the pagoda through a bazaar crowded with people. They entered the large, cool temple, and gazed up into the inscrutable face of the god. On the floor of the temple, in all directions, knelt men, women, and children. The air was heavy with the scent of stephanotis, which the devotees offered as they prayed. The guide pushed his way through the groups, making

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a passage for the visitors to approach nearer. They stood in silence, gazing at the tawdry offerings which were draped on the image—wisps of bright pink net and scarves of tinsel.

Then they went out into the bright sunlight and down to the moat, grey and silent under the frowning walls, with pink lotus blossoms resting lightly on its dingy bosom.

* * * * *

Carol and Captain Fairs were sitting in the large square reading-room at the Salween House Hotel. It was late afternoon; the chits were down, and the room was in semi-darkness. A faint shaft of sunlight, coming through a crevice, fell on a little green lizard which was hurrying over the wooden floor.

Carol lay back in her rocking-chair half-asleep, and idly watched the little creature with his brilliant coat. Then her eyes fell on Captain Fairs, who was reading.

Her life in England seemed very remote. As she looked round on the peaceful, idle scene, and seemed almost to hear the stillness reigning outside, it was difficult to realise that London existed—London with its hurrying crowds and noisy traffic.

She was suddenly aware that someone was speaking. The manager of the hotel had come into the room, and was saying to Captain Fairs, with a beaming smile,

“You would like to see national theatre?”

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"Yes, yes!" cried Carol eagerly from her corner.

The manager turned to her.

"You put on hats after dinner," he said, "and I shall take you to see doll-dancing. I will go order carriage."

As he departed, still smiling, Captain Fairs said,

"The Burmese are great theatre-goers, you know. They are especially fond of doll-dancing. Their marionette plays are like the old English 'mystery' plays. They teach religion to the people, and always end in the triumph of goodness and truth over vice and sin."

Carol laughed.

"It sounds very improving!" she said.

The moon was up when they drove down the straight white road. In its gleaming light the little pagodas shone like moon-stones. Down dusky avenues they could dimly discern the temples. The deodars whispered together; the fireflies gleamed in the undergrowth.

They reached the theatre—a very large and very ugly erection of wood, with a galvanised iron roof. At the entrance sat a Burmese boy with an immense pink sash on his head. He was beating a tom-tom and singing a mysterious chant.

They approached the miniature pay-box, where an old man took their money and admitted them.

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There were no chairs, but the audience, which was very large, squatted on little square mats on the floor. Everywhere children lay asleep, surrounded by relatives of all ages and sizes; for entire families, including the babies-in-arms, had come to see the show.

Chairs were placed for Mrs. Lake, Carol, and Captain Fairs. Their hotel manager stood beside them. Some little brown-faced Burma girls sidled up to them, and patted and stroked Carol's delicate silk gown.

Every boy wore a gay silk scarf on his head. Every girl smoked a large cigar and made eyes through the smoke at the stolid-faced youths, who did not appear to respond.

The air was full of chattering, and a very discordant sound (discordant, at any rate, to Western ears) proceeded from the orchestra, which was composed of small boys, each clanging or blowing or beating some strange instrument.

Presently the curtain rose, disclosing a tiny stage set with miniature properties. The marionettes appeared and were manipulated with marvellous dexterity by children who leant over absurdly low flies.

It was difficult to guess the import of the play. A dragon, the devil, and a lion came waltzing almost tipsily across the stage. They were in pursuit of a gaily-dressed lady, who wavered between them and an angel on

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horseback. Then all took to flight, and elephants, snakes, and tigers appeared.

Carol's attention wandered. She became absorbed in the audience. Nobody applauded; nobody laughed or cried. A small round-eyed baby crept close to the stage and gave vent to shouts every few moments. But the rest of the huge audience remained unmoved and silent. They fanned themselves ceaselessly. Carol found herself idly watching a family on her left, who were the proud possessors of an enormous cigar. A pretty little girl with roguish eyes and reddened lips, wearing a camelia in her glossy hair, puffed at it for a moment. Then she passed it to a withered old crone, presumably her grandmother, who enjoyed it for a minute or two and handed it on, in her turn, to her daughter, who was nursing a little brown baby.

Near to this group a Burmese boy sat on his heels and gazed with stolid appreciation at the little lady with the camelia.

An hour passed by. Mrs. Lake whispered to Carol.

"This atmosphere is getting unbearable. We must go now."

"But the people are so interesting," said Carol, as she reluctantly followed her aunt out of the theatre.

The hotel manager came out with them, bowing and smiling. He was afraid they

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had not enjoyed themselves, and begged them to come to the other theatre, which, he said, was quite cool, and where there was splendid acting.

After a slight demur on Mrs. Lake's part, they walked with him down the road to where this other theatre stood.

A dance was in progress when they entered. Their guide explained to them that the Princess' maid was dancing to amuse her mistress and a crowd of boys. A clown mimicked the dance from start to finish, while the Princess, looking strangely like Miss Sidney Fairbrother, lolled on a hard wooden chair, and stared in a *blasé* manner at nothing at all.

Finding this entertainment less amusing than the other and the atmosphere equally disagreeable, they soon left.

As they drove home under the moon and stars, Carol was unusually silent.

"I believe you are yearning for the London theatres, Carol," said Captain Fairs, smiling at her.

"You are quite wrong," she replied, "I was thinking how prosaic London would seem after the East."

"If only this wandering could last for ever!" he whispered. "It is rough luck to have to leave you to-morrow. But we shall meet again in Shanghai, and then—"

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CHAPTER XIV

VOYAGE FROM BURMA TO MADRAS

"Blow high, blow low, let tempests tear
The mainmast by the board ;
My heart with thoughts of thee, my dear,
And love well stored,
Shall brave all danger, scorn all fear,
The roaring winds, the raging sea,
In hopes on shore to be once more
Safe moored with thee !"

CHARLES DIBDIN.

IN a small and dirty-looking B.I. boat, and in the teeth of the S.W. monsoon, Mrs. Lake and Carol embarked for Madras.

Oh, that voyage ! There was stickiness everywhere, in the cabins, on their clothes, their hair, their skin. An insufferable heat enwrapped them. The boat rolled like an inebriated Dutchman. A howling, tearing wind, hot as fire, swept along and lashed the waves to fury. Five nights they spent on a skylight, miserable and weary, yet sleepless. The boat was already forty-eight hours late. The ship's food and drink had grown nauseous. Would their journey never end ? They almost wished that the boat would sink, and that soon. Suddenly there appeared a friend in need. A fellow-

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traveller, pitying their distress, brought cocoa to them, freshly boiled. Would they care for it? They thankfully accepted it, and understood to the full, for the first time, the meaning of the words in the advertisement—"grateful, comforting." Then they became interested in their kind friend, and so awoke to life once more.

He was a man of the jungles and woods, who had lived face to face with nature for so long that a childlike simplicity was manifest in his speech and in the directness of his glance. He had lately spent a whole year in the jungle, he told them, without speaking or hearing a word of English. He would have gone mad, he said, if he had not taken to photography. To him were familiar the spoor of the wild elephant, the habits of the tiger and the leopard. But he knew nothing of the ways of men and cities, and had never seen London. Born in India, some forty-two years before, of an Irish mother and a Scotch father, he had never left the country of his birth. Direct and sincere, he had all the instincts of a gentleman. His chivalrous manner to women quite won the hearts of Mrs. Lake and Carol.

They slept on deck again that night, and when they awoke at five o'clock the next morning they saw their friend approaching them with, to their joy, two steaming cups of cocoa.

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"Now who," said Mrs. Lake afterwards, "among the men we know in England would have got up at five o'clock in the morning to make cocoa for us?"

"I don't think it would quite do in England," said Carol seriously, "for a man, a comparative stranger, to come and sit at your bedside and drink cocoa with you, when you're attired in your nightgown. But I never saw anyone so supremely unconscious as this man. The way he watched us put on our kimonos and slippers and go below, chatting all the while—well, give me a jungler!"

As she spoke they anchored in Madras Harbour. The man of the jungle came and joined them on deck.

"I hope you won't forget to let me know if I can get you anything at any time," he said, "in the way of silks, scorpions, or orchids."

They laughed.

"We shall at any rate never forget you," said Mrs. Lake, "not to mention your cocoa. Now remember, you are to come and see me in London. I am very anxious to show London to someone who has never seen it."

"Indeed I will come," he replied.

As they parted, Mrs. Lake suggested that she should find him a wife during his sojourn in England.

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“I shall be difficult to please—now,” he answered laughing, with a quick glance at Carol.

“Another delightful ‘passing ship,’” she said to her aunt, with a little sigh, when he had left them.

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CHAPTER XV

COLOMBO

"None here is happy but in part.
Full bliss is bliss divine.
There dwells some wish in every heart,
And doubtless one in thine."

COWPER.

"CHOTAHAZARI, missy sahib!"

Carol sat up in her bunk, rubbed her eyes, and stared in a bewildered way at the speaker.

A small brown boy, carrying a tray, and grinning widely, was standing beside her. For a moment Carol sleepily wondered if the "friend in need" had sent her up some more cocoa. Then she remembered that he was left behind and that she and her aunt were well on the way to Ceylon.

"Six o'clock, missy sahib, and Colombo in sight!" the small brown boy said, deftly depositing the tray on her knees. Then he went out quickly.

Carol drank her tea, and got out of her bunk.

Seeing that her aunt was still sleeping, she quickly and quietly dressed herself, and left the stifling little cabin. She passed the lower deck, which emitted the curious unmistakable smell of the native, giving her a strong

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feeling of nausea. She turned at the foot of the companion and looked with interest at the little groups of human beings. Some were sitting among their belongings with patient immovable faces, some were chattering volubly, and others were lying prone in sleep. Here and there a woman was soothing a little fretful baby, who writhed in her arms and looked for all the world like a small monkey.

With a little sigh, Carol ran lightly up to the deck above, and leant over the rail. A fellow-passenger came and stood beside her, and they gazed shorewards.

"Colombo doesn't look a very beautiful place, does it?" Carol remarked, in a tone of disappointment.

The view was certainly not prepossessing. A long straggling row of low drab-coloured buildings, with here and there a factory chimney, confronted them. There was nothing to suggest the East save a solitary and somewhat ragged clump of palms.

But the sky was a clear pale blue, and a refreshingly cool breeze was rippling the water in the bay.

"It is cool anyhow," rejoined her companion, "and you will discover that Colombo must not be judged from the sea."

The boat came safely to anchor in the bay. It was surrounded almost immediately by small craft of every description, including the catamaran, an extremely narrow sailing-boat

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with a large outrigger on one side only. Mrs. Lake (who had by this time come on deck) exclaimed that it looked most unsafe, but their fellow-passengers assured her that in the opinion of experts it was perfectly seaworthy. Presently the hotel-boat came alongside. In her was sitting, in a hunched-up position, a large squarely-built man of middle age, with a most amiable smile on his most amiable face. Mrs. Lake at once recognised in this individual her old friend, a Mr. Bellairs, whom she had not seen for many years. Directly he distinguished her, he waved and shouted a welcome. Then he came up the gangway and imprisoned her hand in a strong grip.

"This is good seeing you," he exclaimed heartily, "and little Carol, who has probably outgrown her early taste for peppermints!"

Carol laughed. "No, really, I still adore them!"

Then they all entered the hotel-boat, and were rowed rapidly to the shore.

Promising to join them for dinner in the evening, Mr. Bellairs left them at the hotel. After a rest and breakfast, Carol and her aunt set out in rickshaws to "do" the town. They discovered that Colombo from within is a charming, if rather small, town. They were delighted with the purely tropical vegetation on its outskirts. Carol could not resist a lengthy tour of the shops, and she

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bought many of the useless trifles, with which tourists generally burden themselves.

When Mr. Bellairs came in the evening, they eagerly recounted all that they had seen. Carol was especially struck with the picturesque appearance of the Cingalese, and commented on the real tortoiseshell combs, exactly like those that little girls wear in England to keep their hair back, which the natives affect, perched on their heads like coronets. Mr. Bellairs told her that the more important men wear light-coloured tortoiseshell, which is more expensive than brown. Carol was able to prove this by looking at the waiters. She noticed that the underlings wore brown combs, while the head-waiter was airing one of a beautiful golden colour.

After dinner, Mr. Bellairs and Carol went out on to the verandah to watch a native conjurer, who had taken up his position in the garden. He asked if he might tell Carol's fortune. On her assenting, he spread sand before her, tracing patterns on it with his lean, brown fingers.

"Fair gentleman love this pretty lady," he said, "but he belong to other lady. I see you happy soon." He looked at Carol with his bright keen eyes. "But not with he." He pointed at Mr. Bellairs. "He too old for you—" Mr. Bellairs and Carol exchanged a smile—"too grave for you. I have said."

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He rose almost majestically and stalked away.

Carol sat on the low stone edge of the verandah, her eyes full of dreams. A sigh that was dangerously near a sob escaped her.

"What is the matter, little lady?" asked Mr. Bellairs. "I don't like to see you look so sad. You were such a merry little fairy at eight years old! My little sweetheart I called you then."

She smiled, but did not speak.

"Has someone been hurting you?" he asked. "If so, I should like to give him a piece of my mind."

The tender sympathy in Mr. Bellairs' voice touched and comforted Carol. She forgot for the moment that she barely knew him, that she had not seen him since babyhood. She struggled with an overwhelming desire to weep on his broad shoulder so conveniently near. Instead, she got up and turned away from him.

Then, in a steady voice, she said: "It is nothing! I am foolish, hysterical—what you will—to-night! And that man rather upset me! And then—when you asked me—" She broke off. Somewhere in the darkness a nightingale called. A woman's light laughter rang out from the other end of the verandah.

Mr. Bellairs made a little quick movement towards her, and saw that her eyes were wet with tears. The warm air fanned their faces;

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a faint, intoxicating scent rose up from the tropical plants in the garden below. Carol felt almost giddy for a moment. The tenderness in the man's eyes, the glamour of the wonderful night set all her pulses beating. But she drew back with a little unsteady laugh.

"Oh dear!" she said. "What a goose I am! You are a dear to bear with my foolishness! Look! while we have been talking, a storm has been brewing."

She hurriedly led the way into the hall, as heavy spots of rain were blown in to the verandah.

They found Mrs. Lake placidly knitting. Mr. Bellairs sat down beside her, and they were soon talking of old days. Mrs. Lake recalled only the happy times—when hearts were young, when each day was brimful of joy, and sorrow was unknown. Mr. Bellairs had secretly loved her young cousin, but had been too modest to declare his passion. She had married long ago. Now he found his happiness in remembering incidents, trivial in themselves, but important to him, which proved that she too must have cared.

"All these years I have hoped some day to be her second," he declared, in his cheery way. "I often picture those grey eyes of hers. Nobody has ever taken her place in my heart, nobody—till to-night," he added suddenly, his eyes on Carol's fair head.

Mrs. Lake sighed.

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“I’m afraid she is not very happy,” she said.
“But how few people are really happy!”

“Auntie!” cried Carol. “What a gloomy remark! And how unlike you! Mr. Bellairs and I don’t agree with you in the least, do we?”

And Mr. Bellairs felt a sudden elation at this admission of a confidence between them.

* * * * *

The following morning, Carol was awakened by a storm of wind that shook her window violently. Almost immediately, the panes were blurred with a mighty downpour of rain. She had just time hurriedly to close the window, or her clothes which lay on the chair below it would have been soaked.

“We shan’t be able to spend the afternoon at the club,” she said ruefully to Mrs. Lake as they met in the bathroom. “It means to pour all day!”

But Mrs. Lake took a more hopeful view, which proved to be the correct one. By four o’clock the sun was shining brilliantly, and they started off in rickshaws to the club.

There they were immediately joined by Mr. Bellairs, who was clearly determined to make Carol forget her trouble—whatever it might be.

“Let’s talk scandal!” he began boisterously, when they were all comfortably seated. “It’s the proper thing to do here. In

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the first place, you observe the little lady over there flirting with the bank clerk? ”

“The one with the golden hair?” asked Carol. “And is he a bank clerk? He looks like a young sub. Why, I saw him this morning in a very smart dog-cart.”

“Oh, a bank clerk here is very different from a bank clerk at home,” explained Mr. Bellairs. “And now to discuss the lady. She came out here a year ago, trailing an insignificant little husband who is mildly interested in tea. She was probably in an obscure suburban set at home, but she brought introductions, was invited to dinner by the Governor, and being very pretty, she soon became a popular beauty. She goes about with all the young men in her train, and is in a fair way to being spoilt. Now the humorous part of the story is this. A few months ago a Lady Dawson came out here. She hails from the same place in England as our little friend, but she is a very great lady there. However, she came out here merely as a globe-trotter, without introductions. So what does our little friend do but avenge herself for the many slights she had suffered at home at Lady Dawson’s hands, and cut her right and left? Lady Dawson told me she was only amused, but,” and his face took on a cynical expression, “well, she knew how to be even with her enemy. A little story soon got about that

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at home our friend of the golden hair had never soared above parties given by societies at public galleries—you know the sort of thing—to which ‘Mr. So-and-So and lady’ are invited, wander about unknown, eat a warm ice, and go home very depressed. So she has now a nickname—‘The Soarer.’”

“Oh, dear, what a long story!” sighed Carol.

“And the moral of it is,” said Mr. Bellairs, returning to his usual kindly mood, “that it takes all sorts to make a world. Would you and your aunt like to see the archery ground?”

They both assented, and the first person they saw when they reached it was the golden-haired lady. She was balancing herself on a pair of very high heels, and holding a large bow in her hands. As they passed, they heard her say to the bank clerk:

“Shall we arch?”

And he replied very seriously:

“You have done enough of that lately, and,” laying his hand on his heart, “the arrows are all here!”

* * * * *

That evening they were to dine with Mr. Bellairs at his bungalow. Under the starlit sky, by the side of the splashing waves, they started off in their rickshaws. The road was crowded with carriages and rickshaws carrying smartly-dressed men and dainty women

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in Parisian "confections" to their several destinations. Carol felt gay and hopeful. A soft, warm wind fanned her cheeks; a few little rebellious curls escaped from under her lace mantilla. Her eyes shone, and a bright colour flushed her cheeks, which had grown too pale of late. She looked over the dark space to her left where the sea lay, and a little low murmur escaped her as she breathed a blessing to someone separated from her by the great waters. She turned and saw Mrs. Lake's rickshaw close behind. In the glare of a lamp she caught sight of her aunt's face. A little tender smile was playing on it, and Carol felt sure that she was thinking of the gallant old Colonel, who was so clearly devoted to her. That love affair, thought the girl with a sigh, was likely to progress smoothly. In spite of herself, a little demon of depression seized her, and the gladness died out of her eyes.

Then the rickshaws turned into a side road, and the boys ran more slowly over the rough gravel. They passed between a pair of weatherbeaten stone gateposts, and so arrived at "Tempest Towers," making a great commotion in the silence of the evening.

Mr. Bellairs, looking very festive, with a red rose in his buttonhole, came out to receive them, and gave them a warm welcome. Then he led the way to the verandah, where the other guests were already assembled.

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Mrs. Lake and Carol often looked back to that dinner-party as one of the most charming at which they had ever been present. The large, cool dining-room was redolent with the scent of roses, and was lighted, as a dining-room should be, by candles on the table. Much was made of the guests "from home," and "home news" was listened to with eager interest.

After dinner, they all strolled back to the verandah.

"Mrs. Lake tells me that you sing, Carol," said Mr. Bellairs, as they sat down. "Will you give us the pleasure of hearing you?"

For a moment Carol hesitated. Her songs were all sentimental, and she wondered whether she could trust herself to sing. But she assented, and went with her host into the drawing-room, where the piano stood.

"Shall I fetch your songs?" asked Mr. Bellairs.

Carol tapped her forehead lightly. "They are all here!" she replied, laughing.

Then she sang, in a small but sympathetic voice, a little plaintive love-song:—

"Sometimes between long shadows on the grass,
The little truant waves of sunlight pass;
My eyes grow dim with tenderness the while,
Thinking I see thee, thinking I see thee smile!

And sometimes, in the twilight gloom apart,
The tall trees whisper, whisper heart to heart;
From my fond lips the eager answers fall,
Thinking I hear thee, thinking I hear thee call!"

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There was a short silence as the song ended—that silence which comes when an audience is really touched. Then someone began clapping, and the spell was broken.

“I hardly ever like the words of a modern love-song,” said Mr. Bellairs, “but I like those.”

“So do I,” said Carol. She got up quickly and walked to the window. Then she made her way to the darkest corner of the verandah, and stood looking out into the night and listening to the waves tumbling against the wall at the end of the garden.

An hour later, as she was climbing into her rickshaw, Mr. Bellairs took the red rose from his buttonhole, and handed it to her with a little bow. “An act of homage for the pleasure you have given me to-night,” he said.

Carol took the rose, and, with a roguish smile, laid it on her lips.

“If only you would stay in Colombo!” he said eagerly in a low voice.

But Carol laughingly replied that she would much prefer to keep to her original plan of going round the world.

“When you have gone,” he said, keeping her hand in his, “I shall be always—‘thinking I see thee—thinking I see thee smile!’”

She drew her hand away and kissed it to him as she was rapidly borne down the avenue.

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CHAPTER XVI

VOYAGE FROM COLOMBO TO SHANGHAI

"Now farewell to fair Colombo,
Nestling whitely by the sea,
Oft I'll picture you in mem'ry,
Sweet the thoughts you bring to me.

"Forth we go to other countries,
Where the wily Chinaman,
With his 'chin-chin' and his 'chop-chop'
Wields his toothpick and his fan."

ANON.

MRS. LAKE and Carol were giving a farewell tea-party at the G.O.P. Hotel before embarking on the "Mazzia."

Carol was dressed in a simple white muslin. A pink ribbon on her underskirt gleamed elusively through the folds.

"I have been thinking it over," said Mr. Bellairs, who was an early arrival, "and I have decided that you can't know much about this place yet. So please alter your arrangements, and stay on a few months. There is no hurry. Colombo is far and away better than China or Japan. You really ought to see more of it."

"You are very kind," Carol answered, smiling, "but we must push on."

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Mr. Bellairs turned to Mrs. Lake. "She's not a bit sorry to go," he said. "In a few months she won't remember that she ever came here. Why, I heard her asking you the other day: 'How long were we at Calcutta?' It will be the same here." And he laughed good-humouredly.

"Not at all," said Carol. "But all travellers like to be 'on the move.'"

"You don't think of us poor things who are left behind," said Mr. Bellairs with a melancholy inflection in his deep voice.

"Let us kidnap all three of them!" put in another guest.

"That would seem to be the only way of keeping them in Colombo," sighed Mr. Bellairs. "Well, remember," he added later, as he rose to go, "that every day when my work is done, I shall be thinking of you both—"

He shook hands with Carol last of all.

"If only you would come back this way," he murmured, as he bent low over her hand. Then his cheery presence vanished from their sight.

Next morning when Carol awoke in her little cabin on the "Mazzia," she was surprised to find that her head and her limbs ached violently. She felt unable to rise, and Mrs. Lake anxiously insisted on her seeing the doctor. By the time he came she was in a high fever and by nightfall was seriously

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ill. For several days she tossed uneasily in her bunk, while her aunt nursed her untiringly.

"Poor child!" thought Mrs. Lake, "I fear there is fever in her heart as well."

* * * * *

By the time they reached Penang, Carol was better. Though still very weak, she insisted, against the doctor's wishes, on going ashore. As they approached the pier a pungent disagreeable odour floated out to them. It seemed to be a mixture of drains and rotten cabbages. Every moment it grew stronger, and they found, on landing, that it pervaded the whole town. They were surprised to learn that the smell arose from a luscious-looking fruit, called the "Dorian," which was much in favour among the natives. All over Penang they saw it offered for sale, cut in half, looking like a large red-fleshed melon.

Carol was delighted at the quaintness of the town, at the picturesque costumes of the Chinamen, and at the huge paper-lanterns which hung outside their shops, bearing their names in Chinese characters. But she soon became tired, and was glad to get back to the "Mazzia," where the doctor was anxiously awaiting her.

* * * * *

It was late one afternoon when they reached Singapore. The "Mazzia" was too

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big to pass through the narrow entrance to the harbour, so she made a *détour*, passing outside the lighthouse and following the course taken by the Russian battleships when they were proceeding to Japan during the war. Singapore, with its high, red cliffs and its green hills, reminded Mrs. Lake of her native Devonshire. She and Carol explored the town in rickshaws, took dinner ashore, and afterwards sat listening to the band in the hotel garden, which, with its little round tables, had quite a continental appearance. The band played airs from the latest musical comedies in London, completing their feeling of being in touch with Western civilisation again.

Carol was gradually regaining her strength, and by the time they reached Hong-Kong, four days later, she was herself again. During those four days she had lain in her chair on deck from morning till night. The doctor had been assiduous in his attentions.

"It is wonderful," said Mrs. Lake innocently, "how much time he manages to devote to you. He has several other patients."

Carol blushed vividly, and a light broke in on Mrs. Lake. She was glad of the diversion of landing at Hong-Kong.

Carol was enraptured at the sight of this beautiful harbour—one of the loveliest in

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the world. If Singapore is like Devonshire, Hong-Kong is like Scotland, but a Scotland where the tropical sun is shining, turning the lochs into mirrors of clearest blue, and the hills into mounds of emerald velvet shot with purple. It verily seems as if "a piece of Heaven lies on our earth below."

Even the town, with its ugly modern buildings, looked lovely, for in all the quaint, hilly streets sat the flower-sellers, with their baskets of many-hued blossoms, making the whole place radiant, and filling the air with fragrance. It seemed to Carol that she had arrived in a city of flowers.

Towering over the town is the Peak, where cool, salt breezes blow straight from the open sea. They ascended it by the tiny Funicular Railway, which reaches only to the Peak Hotel. There they changed into sedan chairs, borne by two sturdy Chinamen, who wore large straw hats as big as umbrellas and linen suits of artistic blue. At the back of their waist-belts they carried the customary leather purse containing all their worldly wealth. On the way to the highest point of the hill, the little party passed the barracks. The English "Tommies" raised a cheer, and rosy-faced English children waved their arms. It was like a glimpse of home.

- * * * * *

They were nearing Shanghai.

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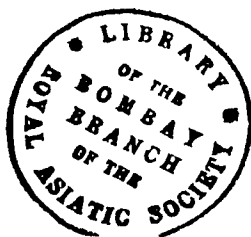
"We shall soon be seeing Captain Fairs now," remarked Mrs. Lake.

The doctor glanced at Carol, and her expression when that name was spoken was not lost upon him.

"I suppose so," she answered carelessly. Then she went on impulsively: "Doctor, I don't know how to thank you. I felt at one time that I should never be strong and gay again."

"Don't thank me," he replied, with a wistful smile, "but don't forget me."

And he walked hurriedly away.



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CHAPTER XVII

SHANGHAI

"Dear, you have spoiled all other men for me,
And made them alien to my happiness.
You have discovered an unknown recess
In Love's great house of ancient masonry."

ELSA BARKER.

Picture the lower Thames, with a trace of Holland thrown in, with a suggestion of Southampton Water, and a family likeness to the Clyde at Glasgow, and you have the river approach to Shanghai. It would be impossible for the man who suddenly awoke on a steamer nearing Shanghai to imagine himself in the Far East, for he would see no Chinamen, and before him would be spread a panorama of drab ugliness of the kind familiar to those who have ever left London outward bound.

Mrs. Lake and Carol were confronted, on landing, by a commonplace esplanade, such as they had seen many times at Dover, Southsea, and other south coast watering-places, but the scene was redeemed from ugliness by the picturesque Chinamen with their long queues, and by the little Chinese women with their stunted feet.

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They made their way across a wide road on which electric trams were plying, and reached the Palace Hotel.

As they went into the entrance hall, Carol glanced eagerly round, with a look of happy expectation in her face.

"Welcome to China!"

In the dimness of the hall, she saw the smiling face of Captain Fairs. After greeting Mrs. Lake, he contrived to speak a word aside to Carol.

"Are you pleased to see me?"

"Of course I am," she replied gaily, "though I had heaps of fun in Colombo!"

"You have been flirting, I suppose," Captain Fairs retorted, losing his usual serenity and frowning angrily. "Flirting becomes a habit with women who travel in India."

Carol was too much astonished to reply. What had happened to her cheery companion?

"Will you dine with us to-night, Captain Fairs?" put in Mrs. Lake, looking from one to the other in a puzzled way.

"I shall be delighted," he replied eagerly.

"We are going to China-Town after tiffin. Won't you come too?"

"I fear I must get off my mail now. But I shall look forward to this evening."

Carol and her aunt found China-Town very fascinating. As they sat in the "Willow pattern" tea-house, drinking tea out of

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Satsuma cups, they felt that this was really China at last. They explored, in rickshaws, the dark and narrow streets, which were filled with crowds of perspiring natives, fanning themselves vigorously, their wily, yellow faces smiling all the while. Tempting wares were displayed in the shops. Carol fell into raptures over some pictures, hand-painted on silk, and bought, after much bargaining, some fans and some jade bangles.

Captain Fairs was waiting in the hall when they came down to dinner in the evening. He was as usual very spruce in his attire, from his well-tied tie to his faultless boots. He looked a very goodly youth, as he stood there, the light glinting on his smooth fair head. He wore an air of profound melancholy.

"Will you forgive me?" he said eagerly to Carol, as she joined him.

"Why, I've forgotten what you said to annoy me," she laughed.

"I hope you remember instead some of the things I said to you on the 'Lulia,'" he rejoined, as they walked into the dining-room.

"How's the work getting on?" asked Carol. "And have you met any nice people here."

"Oh, they're a pretty poisonous lot," he replied, carelessly. "I'm jolly glad to see you again."

Directly dinner was over, they all set off

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in rickshaws. Darkness, as well as distance, lends enchantment to any view ; and, in the glow of the lanterns and the glare of the rickshaw lamps, the native shops and streets wore a romantic aspect. They passed the native theatres, in the doorways of which men stood banging on the cymbals. Through these doorways they caught glimpses of Japanese girls in gaily-hued kimonos and golden obies, flitting about on the rough wooden stages, fanning themselves, shrieking and posing for the benefit of the large audience who sat below, silent and eager. On through the narrow streets they went. Sedan chairs flitted by them, lacquered in gold and black, and they caught hasty glimpses of Chinese beauties languidly fanning themselves, half-hidden by gauzy curtains, and rendered more attractive by being only half-visible. The streets hummed with the joyous note of a holiday crowd. Everywhere were smiling faces. Mrs. Lake commented on this atmosphere of cheerfulness.

"If you knew these people better," Captain Fajrs assured her, "you would know that they are really regarding you with great contempt, and that they are amused at everything which occurs—even if it should happen to be the murder of their dearest friend."

When they got back to the hotel, Mrs. Lake went straight to her room. Her eyes, she declared, ached with looking.

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Captain Fairs took the opportunity of saying to Carol :

"This is the moment I have waited for all day."

Carol smiled, and led the way to a far corner of the lounge.

"I always feel I have so much to say to you," he went on, "and yet when I am with you I don't seem to remember anything. I can only chaff and joke and look at you. It's rough luck that we must part one day soon—"

"Let's hope we shall meet again," said Carol.

"If we don't meet again," he answered solemnly, "I shall do something desperate. But we shall. I am coming home in the autumn—and then—"

Carol laughed.

"You are going to be married," she finished for him.

He sighed.

"I wish the mater and Kitty got on a bit better."

"Doesn't your mother—?" Carol began.

"Mother is old-fashioned. She has her linen-cupboard, her store-cupboard, her still-room. Kitty is—well, she is Kitty, an up-to-date amusing young woman."

A little pause ensued.

"You are so serious to-night," said Carol.
"I like you better as you were in India."

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He looked at her rather sadly.—“Will you give me your photograph—in evening-dress—please?”

“I have only rather large ones, and I don’t know—”

“I should like a life-size picture of you,” he exclaimed. “To hang in my own room.”

“I don’t think I will send you one at all, but I’ll think it over.”

“Thank you.” He paused. “You don’t know what an impression you have made on me. I just can’t settle to anything. I didn’t realise all that you meant to me till we parted. That’s why I’m so depressed and different.”

“Oh don’t,” said Carol softly, looking tenderly at his troubled face. “I can’t bear it!”

He looked eagerly at her. “Do you—have you ever met him yet—Carol?”

She bent her head. “Yes,” she murmured, and she caught her breath in a quick sigh. She got up and held out her hand. “Good-night, Captain Fairs,” she said, in a very small voice.

The hall was deserted ; most of the lights had been extinguished. Captain Fairs caught and kissed her fingers, then looked at her wistfully. She did not raise her eyes. Very quickly she turned, and ran swiftly upstairs.

He stood quite still until the last rustle of her dress had died away.

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE INLAND SEA

"And oh ! if there be an Elysium on earth,
It is this, it is this."

THOMAS MOORE.

SOME days later, Mrs. Lake, Carol, and Captain Fairs left Shanghai. The sun was gilding the ugly uninteresting buildings and giving them a fictitious beauty. Even the sluggish river borrowed a little sparkle from the sunbeams.

A small crowd of men came to wish them *bon voyage* and boarded the fussy little tender that was to carry them to the American ship "Java."

There was a great confusion of leave-takings. Then the whistle blew once, twice, thrice ; those who were not going had to step quickly ashore ; and the travellers were off, bound for Japan, amid a storm of good-byes and the waving of hands and handkerchiefs.

After an hour's run down the river, they sighted the S.S. "Java." She was lying just beyond the "Mazzia" and looked very insignificant by the side of the great P. & O. vessel.

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The luggage was speedily hauled aboard, and the passengers, after inspecting their cabins, stood in desultory talk on the deck till the gong summoned them below to dinner.

Carol was barely awake next morning when she was greeted by the following remark, uttered in a strong nasal twang :

“Say, don’t you want breakfast?”

She looked over her bunk, and saw the head of a woman, presumably the stewardess, poked into her cabin door.

“Certainly I do,” she replied quickly, rubbing her eyes.

“Well, breakfast’s on—will I fetch you some here, or can you dress in time? In twenty minutes it’ll be done.”

“I will dress,” replied Carol, with as much dignity as she could muster, from her upper berth, “and please tell my aunt. She is in the next cabin. We have not been called.”

Carol listened with amusement for Mrs. Lake’s good-natured comments on the annoying situation, and she was not disappointed.

The head of their table was taken by the doctor, a genial American. At the table also were three Germans, an Englishman, and another American, who had an earnest, thoughtful face and deep-set, haunted eyes. He carried a small Bible in his hand and perused it at intervals.

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Carol sat next to the doctor. The sun, coming through the port-hole, glinted on her hair, and the doctor looked at her with interest. But it was obvious that the American girl at the centre table, with her straight dark locks, won his more complete approval. He talked to Carol in a slightly perfunctory manner, and ever and anon his gaze strayed to the object of his admiration, who was unconcernedly devouring a mutton chop.

All day the ship ran between little islands rising sheer out of the brilliantly blue waters—queer little islands covered with emerald-green grass, with here and there a group of wooden buildings, or a pine-tree standing lonely against the sky-line.

The weather was perfect. The shade thermometer stood at 78° and a pleasant breeze was blowing.

Carol felt at peace with all the world, as she sat on deck between Captain Fairs and her aunt, lazily writing her diary.

A little round-faced man, who had been gazing at Carol for some time, came and sat down on a deck-chair near to the little group.

“Pretty sight!” he remarked presently.

Carol dimpled and smiled and acquiesced.

“This inland sea always pleases me,” he went on, “all those little islands are so quaint.”

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Carol leant forward. "Not a very comfortable boat, is it?" she remarked.

"Pretty bad!" he replied, "but I have been in worse."

Then he looked at Carol's writing materials, threw back his head and laughed. "You are a funny woman," he exclaimed, "writing, writing, writing. Hang letters! Why should people have letters?"

"This is a diary," explained Carol, "and some day I may make it into a book."

"Then I must review it," he replied. "I positively must review it! Let me read the first few pages."

"Never!" cried Carol. "Nobody reads my diary but my aunt."

He shrugged his shoulders, closed his eyes, and in a few minutes was asleep. Carol looked at Mrs. Lake in astonishment, and they both began to laugh.

"What an extraordinary man!" whispered Mrs. Lake. "He really is fast asleep!"

Captain Fairs looked rather angrily at their new acquaintance, and hurriedly suggested a walk.

The next day Nagasaki was reached.

The passengers hastened ashore and were immediately surrounded by grinning rickshaw men, who smiled, gesticulated, and bowed incessantly. They were small, wiry men, with brown monkey-like faces and tremendous calves to their legs. Mrs. Lake,

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Carol, and Captain Fairs attempted to walk about the town, but they were followed by an army of rickshaws. So they resigned themselves to the inevitable, climbed into rickshaws, and ordered the men to go to Mogi, a fishing village some distance away. The drive was enchanting. They raced through hilly and wooded country, and past little Japanese shops and houses, obtaining peeps of many charming interiors. Everywhere in the "best sitting-room" could be seen a recess containing a kakemono, and before it a vase of flowers, freshly gathered.

When they were half-way towards Mogi they made a halt at a tea-house, where they had their first experience of the pale-coloured Japanese tea. It was served by dainty little Japanese girls, who also brought them camelias on tiny lacquer trays.

On the way back they stopped at the tea-house again, and there, to Carol's astonishment, sat Colonel Shore. She noticed that Mrs. Lake's surprise was not so great as her own.

"I got leave and have been staying in Nagasaki," he explained, "and am going to give myself the pleasure of joining your ship." Then he went on hurriedly, looking somewhat embarrassed, "I was speaking, as you came in, of the Japanese walls. Have you noticed them? They present a studied irregularity, like the art of Sarah Bernhardt."

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Carol smiled at him encouragingly.

"Art is everywhere in Japan, even in the arrangement of that little maiden's hair." He indicated one of the waitresses. "But art is not to be compared with nature. And nature has been very kind to you, my dear young lady." He bowed to Carol and got into his rickshaw with a far-off speculative expression in his rather prominent blue eyes.

The next evening the ship reached Kobe. Carol and Captain Fairs went ashore after dinner and walked up the quaint main street, which was alive with chattering Japanese. They found the little shops very fascinating, and Carol flitted from one to the other, purchasing some clogs among other things. Multi-coloured lanterns hung outside the shops, plentifully covered with Japanese characters, and at the end of the street long flags, looking like wide sash-ends, floated in the breeze and denoted the whereabouts of a theatre.

They came presently to a sort of fair, with little toy-stalls, where they amused themselves by buying small Japanese dolls.

When they returned to the jetty, they found a launch waiting to take them on board, and on the launch the little round-faced man, who was carrying a large bag of peaches. He went and sat by Carol, and informed her that he had been interviewing

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the managers of the retail drapery shops, as he was a traveller in silks and hoped to place some orders at Kobe and at Yokohama.

Carol was politely interested, and told him about her purchases of silk in India and Burma. He said that he feared she had not obtained the best kind, and asked if he might show his patterns to her and Mrs. Lake when they got on board. Then he moved away to the other side of the launch.

Carol noticed a lingering smile on the face of one of the other passengers who was sitting near. Presently this passenger leant across to her and said in a low voice :

"Major D'Alroy has been what is commonly termed 'pulling your leg.'"

"Major? Is he a Major?" asked Carol bewildered, "but he said—he told me—"

"Oh, I know," laughed the other. "He sits opposite to me at table, and he tried to take us all in. He is certainly a Major. He is quartered at Hong-Kong and is on leave. Look, he is laughing now at his success with you!"

Carol flushed. "I will be even with him!" she exclaimed. "Captain Fairs, you must back up everything I say."

"Oh, rather," he replied. "What do you propose doing?"

But she only looked at him with a mischievous smile.

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The whistle blew. The launch cast her mooring-rope and went astern. The Major came back to his place by Carol.

"I want to speak to you, Major," she said severely.

He laughed. "Oh, I say now, don't be cross," he pleaded. "I'll own up. Did you really mind?"

"I am exceedingly vexed," she replied. "Still, we will not pursue the subject. Where have you been to-night?"

"Sitting in a hotel listening to a very inferior band?" he replied. "And you?"

"We have had a glorious time." Carol paused and smiled, as if at some delightful recollection. "We found a kind of Earl's Court."

"Over the bridge?" he asked. "In Geishaland?"

"Yes, over the bridge. There were Geisha and tea-houses, and—and—and switchbacks, and they gave us little Japanese and English flags, which we waved over our heads, and we ate sweets—where are they, Captain Fairs?"

He at once produced some sweets.

"They are love drops—so they told us," went on Carol, handing them to Major D'Alroy. "You eat one and you fall in love."

"I don't require the sweets. I am always in love with one woman or another,"

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responded the Major. "Just now—" he broke off.

They were rapidly nearing the ship.

"Aren't you sorry you missed all we saw?" said Carol very sweetly to the Major. "The Geisha were so pretty."

"I am very sorry," he replied, and rose to get a better view of the "Java." As he did so Captain Fairs deftly deposited a very ripe peach on the seat. Carol was convulsed with laughter as she watched the poor Major subside on to it.

"How badly we are behaving!" she whispered to Captain Fairs. "But we are even with him, anyhow!"

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CHAPTER XIX

THE INLAND SEA (*Continued*)

“Oh ye who tread the narrow way
By Tophet-flare to Judgment Day
Be gentle when the ‘heathen’ pray
To Buddha at Kamakura.”

RUDYARD KIPLING.

YOKOHAMA lay basking in the fierce rays of a blazing sun as the “Java” came to anchor in the bay.

Carol looked with scant interest at the handsome villas scattered on the Bund, and rather listlessly followed her aunt and Colonel Shore on board the launch in which Captain Fairs was already seated. They were soon speeding shorewards, the Colonel softly singing, “In the North Sea lived a whale !”

“Happy whale !” sighed Mrs. Lake, who was feeling rather overheated, “to live in the North anything !”

Carol could not even smile. She wondered how her aunt could be so cheerful sitting close to a very smelly engine on this very greasy little boat. Captain Fairs, too, was being most amiable and obliging. He had taken charge of a

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large wicker basket and was placidly nursing it, while its owner, a small Japanese lady, was struggling to soothe the sobs of her little baby.

"I suppose I must be a very disagreeable person," thought Carol, but she considered that she had some cause to grumble when she looked at her arms, swollen and disfigured as they were with prickly heat. She felt that life was after all bearable when she reached the hotel and was shown into her large many-windowed bedroom, communicating with Mrs. Lake's on one side, and on the other with a spacious bathroom paved and tiled with gleaming white tiles.

Early next morning they started for Kamakura, there to see the largest Buddha in the world—the Daibutsu, in the head of which a man can sit.

Captain Fairs and Major D'Alroy walked with Carol and her aunt to the station, where they found Colonel Shore awaiting them, armed with two bouquets.

"Blue is your colour," he said to Mrs. Lake, as he handed her a bunch of heliotropes, fragrant and dewy. "And pink is yours," he added, turning to Carol and giving her a posy of carnations.

This graceful attention was very pleasing to them both, although Carol found her carnations rather a white elephant before the day was over.

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"I wish I had thought of getting you flowers," Captain Fairs remarked crossly, as Carol bent over her carnations. "Carol—"

She looked up, surprised at the sudden pain in his tone. His eyes were fixed on her with an expression of hopeless misery.

She walked quickly away and got into the train.

During the journey she sat a little apart from the rest and took no share in the conversation. Once a little smile parted her lips as she saw how contentedly her aunt and Colonel Shore were chatting together and how supremely happy they both looked. Absorbed in her own reflections, she was quite surprised when the train came to a standstill at Kamakura station. They at once took rickshaws to see the Daibutsu, got out at the gateway, and walked through the small green garden to the foot of the huge god.

Several silent figures were bent in prayer before the Buddha, and they waited to approach till the little knot of worshippers had moved away. Then Captain Fairs climbed up into the head of the Buddha and looked at them through one of the huge eyes.

After tiffin they set off to Enoshima, the Island of Beauty. The sun's rays were very fierce as they walked across the sandy waste to the bridge which connects Enoshima with the mainland. Colonel Shore walked by

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Carol's side, holding a sunshade over her.

"You and your aunt did not come to Peshawar," he said, "so I got leave and made for Japan!"

"We were very surprised to see you in Nagasaki," Carol remarked demurely.

"Miss Carol—do you think?" he asked eagerly—"is it of any use my keeping on the bungalow?"

Carol smiled. "I think," she replied softly, "that you may certainly—hope!"

She walked on rather more quickly till they caught up the others, and then she contrived to join Captain Fairs and Major D'Alroy, and leave the two elder people together.

She felt as if she were an experienced matchmaker when, on looking over her shoulder, she saw her aunt rather coyly offering and Colonel Shore accepting a sprig of heliotrope.

The island of Enoshima showed green and flowery as they climbed the main street. They looked at the quaint little shops on the way, and then rested at the tea-house on the top.

The people seemed sadder, duller, and less talkative than their neighbours on the mainland, and their skin looked darker.

The women, too, were plainer, and had none of the dainty elusive charm of the

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little girls in the tea-houses of Moji and Nagasaki.

On the return journey it was Major D'Alroy who monopolised Carol. He noticed that she was a little *distracte* and exerted himself to tell her funny stories, in the hope of cheering her. He told her that in his young days he had been very fond of shooting, and that one autumn he had gone to Scotland to shoot with an old Scotch laird who had the reputation of being very stingy. The luncheon was brought out to the shooters by the laird's man, and proved to consist only of a few dry sandwiches. "Hoots," said the Scotsman, "my butler's an awfu' man. I must send him awa'." The next autumn the Major was invited there again, and the same luncheon was put before him. The laird again made the same remark, but this time his guest tersely rejoined: "I'm thinking it's the same butler."

Carol laughed. "My mother is Scotch," she said, "but she is not at all like that!"

He then went on to recount an amusing story, typifying the extraordinary notions of honesty held by the native servants in India. He told her that he had left his bearer in Bombay in charge of some boxes while he went up country. A few days later he received a letter from the servant which ran as follow—"Dear Sir, I am sorry to have to tell you that last week your boxes-developed

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a devil-may-care air and eloped themselves from my custody. By God, it is a shame!"

Then the Major began discussing the mosquito bites from which they had all been suffering, and told Carol that he had had an amusing experience on board a P. and O. ship. An elderly spinster told him that she had a bad mosquito bite, very inflamed and swollen. He offered to doctor it with some special lotion he happened to possess. He went to his cabin to fetch the bottle, and on his return to the deck, asked her to let him apply the stuff, as this required to be done carefully. To his surprise, she said coyly :

"Oh, I couldn't, Major D'Alroy."

"Nonsense, it's no trouble," he replied.

Still she objected.

"Come, show it to me," he said.

Then she turned very red. "I may as well tell you, Major," she said, giggling, "that the bite is on my knee. I could only show it to my future husband."

At that, the Major said, he dropped the bottle and fled.

Carol laughed heartily at her companion's reminiscences, which continued till they reached the train, and served to divert her mind from the heat and troublesome flies.

Captain Fairs caught them up on the platform.

"We are going to the theatre to-night,"

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he said. "Carol, will you sit next to me?"

* * * * *

"Why have you deserted me all the afternoon?" he asked her later, as they sat in one of the quaint little theatre boxes arranged with chairs for Europeans.

"Have I?" she replied. "Well, here I am now." She smiled and added, after a slight hesitation, "Captain Fairs—does your work always take you just wherever we go?"

He flushed. "Do I bore you?"

"Not a bit—still, I was wondering. Those motoring-roads! When do you write about them? Of course, I like you to travel with us—"

"Do you really mean that?" he asked. "Well, to tell you the truth, I meant to stick to you and your aunt, if I might—your route is the same as mine. Don't tell me not to," he added impulsively. "It is not for long now!"

She looked down at the programme that lay on her knees—she wondered why the print seemed misty and blurred.

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CHAPTER XX

TOKIO

"He was only a man, so how should he know,
That his light words wounded a woman so?"
ANON.

"I AM always glad," said Captain Fairs, "when our party is once more reduced to its original dimensions. Two's company, three's none, doesn't seem to apply here. We are like a jolly little family, aren't we?"

He did not observe the crestfallen expression on Mrs. Lake's face, but went on, with joyous self-confidence. "That Major D'Alroy was such a nuisance! Always tacking himself on to us. And even old Shore—"

"He is a dear," Carol interrupted, warmly. "And I only wish that he could have come on to Tokio with us. But never mind, we shall meet him again soon."

Captain Fairs smiled. "And meanwhile we will contrive to enjoy ourselves here," he said, as the train drew into Tokio station with a jerk.

At first sight the place appeared, to them, ugly and uninteresting. Electric trams clanged

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and rattled their noisy way through the streets, which were lined with modern Europeanised shops, and the modern Japanese gentleman in European frock-coat and bowler hat was appallingly *en évidence*. Even the sweet little maidens in prettily flowered kimonos wore cheap straw hats adorned with tawdry flowers and lace, imported from England, and Carol shuddered at the sight of three elderly Japanese men in kimonos, top hats, and black kid gloves! But when the beautiful moat came into view they all exclaimed with pleasure at the sight of the peaceful water lying cool and green under high frowning walls, and after a drive through the famous Shiba Park they decided that there were some redeeming features in Tokio after all.

“But oh! the sorrow of the undertone—
The wail of hopeless weeping in the dawn
From lips that smiled through gilded bars at night.”
ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

One clear, starry night they visited the famous Yoshiwara district. They alighted from their ponderous landau at the gates which divide this under-world from the city.

They passed down its numerous streets in silence, saddened at the thought of the lives of the two thousand girls who dwell there in misery and vice. Tricked out in gorgeous kimonos, decked with flowers, and with painted faces, they sit night after night in

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large square rooms resembling cages. Some of them looked mere children. As they went down one little alley, a slender hand shot out through the bars of one of the cages and seized Carol's wrist. A pathetic little painted face was pressed close against the bars, gazing at the wrist and the bracelet upon it. Carol gave a little cry and pulled her hand away. A drunken sailor, who was a witness of the incident, gave a gruff laugh. The little Japanese girl shrank back and drew her gaily embroidered kimono round her with a sad sigh. Then she rallied, opened her fan, and, with a shrill little giggle, ogled the sailor over the top of it.

It was a subdued and thoughtful party who drove back to the hotel through the crowded streets.

* * * * *

"I must not say that thou wert true,
Ye, let me say that thou wert fair."

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

"At last came love; not whence I sought nor
thought it."

BAILEY.

"I'm out to enjoy myself to-day," cried Carol, as they left the hotel in rickshaws one morning. "And I feel extravagant. I shall buy, and buy, and buy. First let us stop here; I see some dreamy kimonos." She signed to her boy to stop, and leapt lightly to the ground. The shop was almost on a

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level with the street and was open on all sides. The floor was covered with spotless yellow matting.

"O hayò," said the little Japanese shopkeeper, bowing low.

"O hayò," responded Carol, and flopped on to a cushion on the floor.

The man spread his wares before her, and she fingered the delicate silks, the dainty gauzes, and the brightly-hued *crêpes* with admiring eyes. Mrs. Lake fell into raptures over a grey silk kimono lined with purple, and with the Shogun crest on the sleeves and back. She slipped her arms into it, and began to bargain fiercely. Carol pulled on a silk *crêpe* in varying shades of pink, powdered over with cherry blossoms, and stood smiling up at Captain Fairs for his approval. The shopmen murmured together at the pretty sight. Captain Fairs flushed a dusky red.

"Do I look nice?" asked Carol mischievously.

"You know you do," he replied, and his voice sounded almost stern and cold.

"Auntie," Carol appealed to Mrs. Lake, "shall I buy this?"

Her aunt turned and smiled at her.

"What do you think, Captain Fairs?" she enquired.

"Don't ask him," protested Carol. "He is cross this morning; I can't think why.

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Well, I shall decide on this!" She slipped it off, and picked up a dull, grey-blue gauze embroidered with storks.

"I believe I must have this, too," she said. "I wonder if it's very extravagant of me?—and I should love that white one! I might give it away as a present, but I positively must have it."

As she climbed into her rickshaw, laden with parcels, she cried to Captain Fairs, "Come on, poor martyr, now for your tombs and palaces! Arrigato. Sayonaro."

Round by the moat they sped, where the water-lilies lay on their silky leaves, and then on through the park to gain a view of the palace, which the sight-seer is not permitted to approach too nearly.

As they got out of their rickshaws, in the hotel garden, Captain Fairs contrived to speak to Carol alone.

"You said I was cross this morning, but I'm not exactly cross. Something has happened—something that changes my whole life."

He paused, evidently trying to master some overpowering emotion.

After a few moments, he went on in a singularly expressionless voice: "I've had a letter from Kitty, throwing me over. It seems she's had a better offer. I'm awfully disappointed in her. I could never have believed she'd jilt me. I'd have stuck to

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her—you know I would, even though—” He cast a sidelong glance at Carol, but he could not see her face.

“The mater has written to me, too. She’s evidently relieved. She never trusted Kitty as I did.”

They were just entering the hotel. Carol turned to him and held out her hand. “I’m sorry,” she said, in a rather unsteady voice, “that you’re in trouble.”

He seized her hand, and tried to look into her eyes. “I’m not quite sure,” he answered, “that I am—in trouble.”

Carol freed her hand from his grasp and ran quickly up the stairs.

* * * * *

“There are maidens that I know

In the town of Tokio,

Little Geisha girls——

There are maidens in Japan

Who can conquer any man——

But you, my dear, are good enough for me!”

C. H. TOWNE.

“We are going to a real Japanese dinner to-night,” announced Captain Fairs one day at a tiffin. “I have been to see Mr. Yamanaka this morning; you remember I told you that I have an introduction to him. He has asked us all to dine with him at the Maple Club at seven o’clock. I think he is also inviting some Japanese men friends.”

—“How about their poor wives?” Mrs.

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Lake asked. "Japanese married women seem to me to have'a very dull time!"

"The cleverest Geisha in all Japan are to amuse us, I believe," Captain Fairs went on. "We must all eat something before we go. The Japanese believe in antique eggs and high snails, I'm told. Carol, you haven't said whether you are pleased or not!"

Carol started and flushed.

"I'm afraid I was dreaming," she said a little incoherently. "Yes, I shall love it, whatever it is, I am sure."

He looked at her keenly for a moment. Their eyes met, and hers fell before something she saw in his. He hurriedly began to explain to her the programme for the evening.

"I shall wear my pink muslin!" she cried. "And do my best to fascinate Mr. Yamanaka."

"You need not put on the pink muslin to do that," said Captain Fairs, in an undertone, as they rose from the table.

* * * * *

Out into the witching warmth of a summer night. Out under the winking stars, under the pale young moon.

"Night of love—oh! lovely night," Carol quoted softly to herself as she leaned back in her rickshaw and felt the soft breeze caress her cheek.

On, down the ugly streets of Tokio town,

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past the insistent clanging of the electric trams and the hum of the traffic, into the silent coolness of a little park where the trees whispered together in soft spasmodic rustlings. The pad of the runners' feet as they sped along was the only sound to break the stillness. Suddenly one of the men drawing Carol's rickshaw broke into a little plaintive song. It could hardly be called singing; it was rather a crooning of the words. He had a touching, sympathetic little voice. The other men took up the refrain softly, yearningly. Carol felt a lump rise in her throat. Then the song changed. It became loud, martial, triumphant. Her sad thoughts fled as the rickshaw drew up with a jerk at the door of the Maple Club.

On the matted verandah they all left their shoes. Carol coquettishly insisted that Captain Fairs should examine the heels of her stockings before she ventured upstairs.

"I wear out my stockings in a day," she said.

Their host met them in the large room above, where dinner was to be served. He was very correctly attired in European evening dress and was full of apologies that he had been unable to arrange a party to meet them. He seemed a delightful little man, clever and entertaining. He indicated little piles of cushions, placed for his guests before separate black ebony tables not more

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than a foot high. . . They all sank on their knees upon the cushions and sat back on their heels in approved Japanese fashion.

A little nei-san ran in and opened the shoji, disclosing a tiny square balcony gay with flowers and lighted by big paper lanterns. Other small maidens fluttered in and placed minute trays of food before them, handing them lacquer saucers of sake, which Carol pronounced delicious. They all wielded their chopsticks with some difficulty.

"We went to the theatre yesterday," Carol told her host, "and saw a very blood-thirsty play. The man murders his wife, and she rises out of a well! It gave me a bad night."

Mr. Yamanaka smiled. "It is gruesome," he admitted. "What do you think of our stage arrangements?"

"Well, I love your scenery," replied Carol, "and I admire your revolving stage. It is like our Coliseum in London. And I think your stage fights are most artistic. Also I think that the pathway through the stalls along which the characters arrive is quite good. But I did not see any love-making."

"Not as you understand it, no," her host agreed. "We do not kiss, for instance; we have not the word in our language."

"How sad!" sighed Carol. "What in the world do you do instead?"

Mr. Yamanaka smiled. "We manage

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somehow," he said. "As a matter of fact we do not use endearing names either."

"What a dull country!" Carol exclaimed.

A rustle of fans, the weird monotonous twanging of the samisen announced the arrival of the Geisha. Five gorgeously clad little ladies filed in. A red lacquer bridge was placed in position, and the wee maidens commenced a slow languorous dance chiefly made up of posing. They wielded their fans and large paper umbrellas with marvellous dexterity, while a shower of cherry blossoms sprinkled by an unseen hand floated down upon them.

"The dance of spring!" said Mr. Yamanaka, beaming approval.

"It's beautiful!" cried Mrs. Lake. "I never imagined anything like this. Did you, Carol?"

"It is perfect," Carol replied. "What a darling that one is with the quite large eyes!"

"She is a very famous Geisha," their host replied. "She will now dance alone."

A quaint intricate dance followed. Then Carol sprang to her feet. "May I teach them to waltz?" she asked eagerly.

Mr. Yamanaka went up to the Geisha and spoke to them.

"They will be delighted," he said, coming back to her.

"Come, Captain Fairs." Carol was dancing

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lightly over the shiny matting. "You and I will have a turn, then you shall take one little Geisha and I another."

The Geisha girls were intensely amused at the sight of the waltzing, and laughed shrilly. They proved apt pupils, and floated round as light as feathers in their instructors' arms.

Then very reluctantly they made their adieux, saying in their soft plaintive little voices: "Sayonara—Sayonara!"

"I have had such a happy evening," said Carol, as they bade good-bye to Mr. Yamanaka. "So really Japanesey! I shall keep this sweet fan for ever."

"You shall have a better fan to-morrow," her host replied, as he shook hands. "You are all coming to luncheon with me and an artist friend of mine. He will paint one for you after lunch, with violets, to match your eyes. We meet to-morrow at the House of a Million Blossoms! Sayonara."

"You evidently made a great impression, Carol," said Captain Fairs, as they climbed into their rickshaws, "although you did not wear your pink muslin!"

Then they went home under the trees and through the silent streets—home, to dream of Geisha and the strange, sad music of the samisen.

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CHAPTER XXI

NIKKO

"The night is come but not too soon ;
And sinking silently,
All silently the little moon
Drops down behind the sky."

LONGFELLOW.

IN a day or two, Mrs. Lake and Carol went on to Nikko. They reached it in the early evening, at the moment of that mysterious rapid closing of the day which takes place in lands where sunsets do not linger. Their rickshaws grated on the gravelly soil as they climbed the steep hill on the side of which rests the little town, in a glow of lantern lights. Up and up they went, through a wonderful avenue of cryptomerias, whose strange subtle scent stole out on the warm air. Then the trees were left behind, and the roadway was lined on either side by quaint little wooden shops, in front of which swung huge paper lanterns. In the doorways stood fascinating little Japanese girls in kimonos and silken obies, and little men with grave, shrewd brown faces. They all smiled pleasantly at the occupants of the rickshaws. In the roadway quaint little

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children were playing at battledore and shuttlecock, or at the more modern "diabolo." Most of the little girls of about ten years old had babies on their backs—queer little serious babies, whose tiny black heads bobbed about wildly as the game went on.

Mrs. Lake threw coins to the children, and she and Carol laughed together at their delight.

The hotel stood at the very top of the hill, and was so picturesque, as befitted Nikko, and so comfortable that they were glad at the prospect of spending a few days there.

Next morning, very early, while yet a little tender breeze was blowing, they started in rickshaws for Chuzenji, still higher in the hills. The road winds steeply upwards through lovely woodlands, past trickling streams and little tea-houses. In parts it is scarcely wider than a goat-track, and enormous boulders block the way. Over these the sturdy little Japanese men pulled the rickshaws, bumping the passengers unmercifully. As they mounted, the air grew cooler and fresher, producing an exhilarating effect on their spirits. At last the top of the hill was reached; the lake burst upon their delighted gaze. They were hurried over a tiny bridge, and there, before them, stood the hotel, and on the steps somebody waving a greeting. As they drew up at the door, they saw that it was Major D'Alroy; and all three had a merry tiffin

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together, recounting their various experiences since last they met.

Carol noticed that Major D'Alroy had acquired a habit of looking over his shoulder, as if he were afraid of an attack from the rear. She was much diverted when he confided to her that a lady, of very uncertain age, who had pursued him throughout Japan, had run him to earth in this hotel. Nor was she less amused when, after tiffin, his admirer pinned him down in a corner and talked to him in a girlish, giggling voice, while he listened with an expression of helpless fright on his face.

"Won't you take me sailing?" Carol heard her say, and, on his refusing, "It was only my nonsense, Major. I know we can't go alone!"

In the afternoon Mrs. Lake and Carol set off to call on the British Ambassador, whose summer residence was on the other side of the lake. His sailing boat, the "Angel," came to fetch them. Unluckily the wind dropped light, and they made a very slow and stately progress towards the house, which was charmingly situated among the trees. The little pier on which they landed was gay with flowers, and on it was placed a prettily-painted seat and a lifebuoy. The Ambassador welcomed them warmly, and advised them not to return to Nikko that night, as the road, being quite unlighted, would be full of

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dangers. He invited them to go with him on the first of August to the great ceremony called "The Opening of the River," which was held at Tokio.

They went back to Nikko next morning, and were bumped and banged on the downward path over the rough stones and rocks, past the waterfalls, the tea-houses, through the woods, past the brawling river, over the bridge, and so back to the hotel.

They spent several days in wandering about beautiful Nikko. Close to the hotel is the famous red lacquer bridge over the stream, an exact counterpart of the ancient one which had been swept away by a flood, on which no foot save that of a Samurai may step. Lovely gardens slope down to the stream in their green and leafy splendour. The temples, the best in Japan, especially interested them, and they saw many fine examples of Torii. The exquisitely beautiful Chinese gate of the chief temple fascinated them with its wonderful carving.

They reached Tokio in time for the "Opening of the River," congratulating themselves that they would see a sight which most tourists miss, as Tokio in August is not very pleasant. The climate, however, was kind on this occasion, and the evening was cool.

It was a picturesque scene. All the boats on the river, and all the tea-houses which

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lined its banks, were gay with lanterns. The plaintive note of the samisen throbbed in the still air.

Near the Ambassador's junk was a boat whose deck was arranged with massive chairs and a table. Carol was amused to notice that the Japanese gentlemen who had ordered all these Western luxuries were sitting on the floor and eating cheerfully with chopsticks at their tiny tables. The Ambassador informed her that the chairs and high tables were regarded as signs of great distinction.

She was much interested, too, at seeing how skilfully the boatmen, armed with punt poles, piloted the huge clumsy junk among the crowds of smaller boats that thronged the river.

As they passed along, strange and varied sights met their view. All Japan seemed to be "on holiday." There was laughing, singing, and dancing, on the boats and in the tea-houses, whose interiors were clearly visible from the river. Suddenly, with a hiss and a bang, rockets ascended, sending sparks and balls of flame over the darkening sky. Then set-pieces sprang into life, and all the river seemed a sheet of flame. Mrs. Lake and Carol exclaimed with pleasure at the beauty of the scene. It was a veritable fairyland. Tokio, the grey and smoky town, became a magic city, lighted by tongues of golden fire.

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It was midnight before they tore themselves away. A merry supper-party at the Embassy was followed by a little music and a quick rickshaw ride back to the hotel.

Next night came a formal dinner-party at the Embassy. With their evening dresses Mrs. Lake and Carol put on a dignity and importance that had been missing the previous evening. They were not surprised to find that the gay and careless chatter of the festival night was exchanged for a solemn discussion on men and matters, and on the affairs of the universe. Carol looked prettily serious as she tried to gain an insight into international policy.

They returned to Yokohama next day, and there they met Colonel Shore and Captain Fairs again. The Colonel insisted on their accompanying him to the theatre. He took Mrs. Lake into one little box, leaving the other for Carol and Captain Fairs, who, under cover of the weird orchestra and the voices of the actors, had some opportunity for conversation. When the stage fighting commenced Carol leaned forward to get a better view of it.

"Most artistic, isn't it?" said Captain Fairs, "but I wish you would talk to me."

Carol laughed.

"Why are you always laughing? I sometimes wonder," he said musingly, "whether your laughter is only a cloak to

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hide your deeper feelings." He looked at her questioningly, but she turned her head away.

Presently he spoke again.

"Do you understand any Japanese?"

"None except 'O hayò' and 'Sayonara.'"

"Even if you knew more, you would not understand theatre language. It is historic Japanese. Do these plays bore you?"

"Not a bit. But I shall be glad to go to a London theatre again."

"And see a play of emotions, as we understand emotions, I suppose? Yes, I agree with you. But our emotional plays would not appeal to the Japanese, though they are a very romantic people."

"Are they, really?" Carol looked surprised.

He lowered his voice.

"Do you remember that night in Shanghai, when you told me you cared for somebody?"

Carol blushed hotly.

"Did I? I—I don't remember," she stammered.

"I thought perhaps, as I had told you about my affair, you might—be inclined—to confide in me."

"Oh, Captain Fairs," exclaimed Carol, almost in tears, "I simply couldn't. Please don't ask me."

"Forgive me," he pleaded. "I was a beast to suggest it. Only we are such friends—"

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CHAPTER XXII

MIYANOSHITA

"The wind breathed soft as lovers' sigh
And oft renewed seem'd oft to die,
With breathless pause between.
O, who with speech of war and woes
Would wish to break the soft repose,
Of such enchanting scene!"

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

"CAROL, do you mind if Colonel Shore comes to Miyanoshita with us?" Mrs. Lake enquired diffidently.

Carol looked up from the trunk she was vainly endeavouring to strap, and vigorously dabbed her hot cheeks.

"Of course not, auntie dear!"

Was it her fancy, or did Mrs. Lake look a little self-conscious?

"Captain Fairs will be with us too," her aunt went on, "and I always think the more the merrier, and certainly Colonel Shore is a very clever man and most entertaining, and I always think men are so useful on a journey, don't you?"

"Of course I do." Carol jumped up and implanted an affectionate kiss on her aunt's cheek.

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Miyanoshita has been aptly named "The Heaven of Japan." High up on the hill-side she is perched, and the approach in places being nothing more than a glorified goat-track, the final stage of the journey must be made by rickshaw.

The glow of sunset was irradiating the hills when they arrived, a gentle breeze caressed their cheeks and a feeling of calm and contentment stole over them as they mounted upwards between the branching trees. The hotel is charmingly situated at the top of a hilly garden. There are numerous bathrooms on the ground-floor—spotlessly clean wooden cabins into which marble baths are sunk, approached by steps in the Roman fashion. They are fed by hot springs.

As Mrs. Lake and Carol were lying lazily in their respective baths soon after their arrival, they could hear Colonel Shore, in a further bathroom, informing the world that "In the North Sea lived a Whale." Carol called out to him that others might be listening, but he cared not a whit, and went on singing and splashing.

Next day they all went together to Lake Hakone. They climbed up and up, through leafy English scenery, across pleasant English fields, through tracks so narrow that the sedan chairs could barely pass, into an avenue of cryptomerias which ended at the

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lake. Fair and calm and placid it lay, gleaming \elusively amidst sheltering trees, under the shadow of Japan's most famous mountain, Fuji-Yama.

They stayed for luncheon at the small and unpretentious inn on the edge of the lake, and were waited on by little nei-sans in bright kimonos and obies. Fish of the lake, tender veal, ices and strawberries formed their repast, and they drank frothy shandygaff, which looked so golden in the sunlight that the Colonel declared it must be nectar.

Then they strolled through the little garden to the lake, and went on board a boat which was to take them to the other side, that they might see the "Great Hell."

The lap, lap of the water on the sides of the boat was indescribably soothing. Though the heat was great, clouds occasionally obscured the sun. The views all round were exquisite. Captain Fairs had eyes for little but Carol, as she lay curled up in the bows.

Lazily, dreamily, the boat slid over the lake, and all too soon the opposite side was reached.

They all sprang ashore, and commenced a stiff climb up to the "Great Hell." Already a strong smell of sulphur pervaded the air, and, as they climbed, it grew stronger still and gave them an irresistible desire to sneeze. Little bubbles of boiling water came out of

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the soil at intervals, and then the sulphur crust was seen, stretching in long greyish-yellow waves downward to the valley—a treacherous crust, looking to the uninitiated like solid earth, but into which the foot will sink, and sinking drag the unwary down to a horrible death.

They scrupulously carried out the injunction of the guide-book, which warned them that “It is advisable to keep to the path and follow the guide,” and, after pursuing a perilous-looking track for some way, they were glad to descend into the valley, and to see their carrying-chairs once more.

Their homeward way lay among fragrant fields where arum lilies grew wild. Captain Fairs gathered armfuls, with which he decked Carol’s chair. The Colonel did the same for Mrs. Lake, and they reached the hotel at Miyanoshita sitting like queens in bowers of lilies.

Next day came the rain—a solid untiring downpour. At any other time Captain Fairs would have found the forced confinement very irksome; but he was delighted at the opportunity it afforded for long and intimate talks with Carol. By the time evening fell he was furiously jealous of the man, whoever he might be, who had won the treasure of her heart.

They set off again very early the next

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morning, in the clear cool air and pale sunlight that is so lovely in the hills before the heat and brilliance of the day has turned the delicate pinks and purples and greys into hard shadows and glittering lights. The raindrops still lingered on the trees, glistening like diamonds in the sun. The sky of tender blue was flecked with cloudlets soft and ethereal as a white dove's wing.

The colonel sang as his rickshaw sped along, but no longer the Song of the Whale. The calm of the morning produced on him a softening effect, and he sang in a monotone the only sentimental song he knew :

“Now the ragman and the bagman
Met together in a barn,
Said the ragman to the bagman
‘I will do you no harm.’”

At the foot of the hill they took train to Kyoto, the last place they were to visit in Japan. They reached it late that evening, but they were able to form the opinion, as their rickshaws took them to the hotel, that Kyoto is the prettiest of the large Japanese towns.

Next day they all went to Lake Biwa taking their luncheon with them. The way lay through a pleasant road shaded by trees. At Otsu, on the edge of the lake, they left their rickshaws and took the boat to Sakamoto. They were delighted with

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this pretty village and wandered through the fields, eating their lunch under the trees. Then they went back by boat to Otsu, and there they got into the boat that was to carry them, by the canal, back to Kyoto. In the long, dimly lighted tunnels, they noticed strange insects fluttering along in the darkness, barely escaping the occupants of the boats.

"What a good place to visit on a honeymoon," murmured Mrs. Lake sentimentally. "Don't you agree with me, Carol?"

Carol blushed and acquiesced, avoiding the eager glance which Captain Fairs directed at her.

"I shall bear that in mind," suddenly remarked the Colonel, looking intently at Mrs. Lake.

When they emerged again into the open, the scene was quite Scotch in its splendour of hills, dales, and foliage. Mrs. Lake grew more pensive still. She looked round with an irritated frown at the boatmen who were talking and laughing gaily.

"If one could only float in silence, among these hills," she said, "one could forget for a while the world and all its troubles."

She sighed and closed her eyes.

"I don't want to forget the world," Captain Fairs whispered to Carol. "But your aunt is right about the honeymoon."

* * * *

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When they said farewell to Kyoto, they said farewell also to the Colonel, who had been their companion through so much of Japan. He was to meet them again in Peking.

"I hate good-byes," he said, holding Mrs. Lake's hand. "When my father was dying I just said, 'Goodbye, sir,' and walked out of the room. I will now, with your permission, do the same." He shook hands with the others, and then, holding himself very stiffly, he walked away.

At noon Carol and her aunt, with Captain Fairs, reached Osaka. Flags were flying in the station, and on the platform stood a row of smiling Japanese, in every variety of costume, ranging from very correct European attire to a kimono and top hat.

"They look," exclaimed Carol, "like a party of people who have lost all their clothes and who have been lent numerous oddments by their friends."

As the train drew up, this motley crowd gathered round the adjoining carriage, from which a lady and gentleman alighted, bowing and smiling.

"Doctor Block!" announced Captain Fairs, "the great scientist. He is touring all over Japan with his wife."

The Blocks were escorted to rickshaws. An immense bouquet of roses was handed to Mrs. Block, and they started for the hotel,

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a long line of rickshaws following them, at the end of which were those containing Carol, Mrs. Lake, and Captain Fairs. As they went, sharp cracks like pistol shots rang out, and there followed a very fine exhibition of daylight fireworks.

"I somehow feel," said Mrs. Lake, as she pointed out a specially fine rocket that was shrieking skywards, "that this is all in our honour!"

* * * * *

The train which took them to Chiminoseki ran close by the side of the Inland Sea. The colours on sea, hill and mountain were exquisite.

"If I were not so anxious to see Corea," exclaimed Carol, "I should wish that this beautiful journey might last for days and days."

Captain Fairs agreed, but he was not looking at the scenery. His eyes were fixed on her enthusiastic face.

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CHAPTER XXIII

COREA (SEOUL)

"Ay, beauteous is the world, and many a joy
Floats through its wide dominion."

GOETHE.

PINK and primrose tints, glad heralds of the sunrise, spread slowly over the awakening sky, and scattered the torn and angry rain-clouds, which had obscured the stars of night.

The heavens showed, palely, clearly blue, and a group of Corean men, who had been sheltering in the primitive waiting-room, came out, picked their way cautiously through the puddles and mud of the road-way, and stood together on the quay.

The boat from Japan was nearing Fusan. On the deck the sailors could be seen, running hither and thither, shouting and gesticulating, ropes ready in their hands.

The boat came alongside, was warped and berthed, and a gangway was flung shorewards.

The captain left the bridge and shook hands with Mrs. Lake and Carol, who were preparing to land. Captain Fairs came out of the dim little saloon, and they all hurried ashore.

As they landed, Carol exclaimed with

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pleasure at the sight of the queer, small Corean men, with their grass-lawn coats, their little high hats of black crinoline tied under the chin, and with one, two or three buttons behind their ears to denote their rank, their spotless white stockings, and their shoes turned up at the toes. Mrs. Lake remarked that they looked more intelligent, and were certainly better-looking, than the Japanese.

A day's train journey brought them to Seoul, and they were astonished at the primitive one-storied buildings fashioned principally of mud, and at the unmade roads in this, the capital of Corea.

They were fortunate enough to see a Royal procession—the Emperor and Empress and the maids-of-honour on their way to visit the old ex-Emperor at the Palace. Carol said that the scene reminded her of comic opera. The waiting crowds were fantastically dressed in every variety of costume. Some of the men wore pale blue coats and enormous straw hats, coarsely woven and as large as umbrellas. Others were in grass-lawn, their finer straw hats indicating that they were in mourning. The small crinoline pot-hats were worn, it appeared, only by the men of high social standing. The dress of the women was exceedingly picturesque. The countrywomen were in cerise or pale blue or red, with a gauzy drapery as a head-

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covering. The women of Seoul wore green silk coats, put on over their heads, the sleeves hanging uselessly down over their shoulders.

In the first carriage came the Emperor, wearing his state-robcs. Beside him sat his fourteen-year-old bride, who looked like a little boy, in her short yellow coat, with her hair in a tight plait.

In the next carriage came the ladies of the Court, wearing enormous plaits of artificial hair looped over their ears. They were much painted and powdered, and were attired in brilliant colours.

Mrs. Lake and Carol had got out of their rickshaws, and felt as if they were looking on at a musical comedy from the wings, as they stood in the crowd watching this motley pageant drive down the principal street of the principal town in Corea.

When they reached the hotel once more, they found awaiting them the wife of the English Consul, who invited them all to stay at the Consulate. They gladly accepted her invitation, and had a delightful visit at the charming old-world house, which reminded them of some old English mansion, set in beautiful grounds. Mrs. Lake and Carol shared one of the big and airy spare-rooms, and were waited on by a Chinese "armah," who had been for many years in the service of the Consul's wife. She plainly showed her admiration of Carol's delicate beauty

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and her keen interest in the relations between her and Captain Fairs.

The large, square hall of the Consulate is surrounded with quaint Korean chests and cabinets ornamented with brass in wonderful designs. Carol was very anxious to possess some of them, and also one of the green silk coats that the women of Seoul wear.

"There is a history connected with those coats," Mrs. Marjoribanks told her, "would you care to hear it?"

Carol eagerly asked for the story.

"Long years ago," began her hostess, "the women of Seoul were left alone in the city. The men had all gone off to work in some distant place. During their absence a hostile tribe came up to attack the town. The women were in a panic; they were quite defenceless. Then one with a more fertile brain than the rest seized her husband's coat and put it over her head. 'Come, we will dupe them yet,' she said. 'Put the men's coats over your heads and follow me.' The order spread like wild-fire. The women stood and lined the walls, a solid mass of green. Their assailants paused, wavered, then fled incontinently, leaving the women masters of the situation. Ever since, the women of Seoul have, at the request of the men, worn men's coats in exactly that way—heads covered, sleeves hanging. The men themselves have adopted a different kind of coat."

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Carol exclaimed that now she must certainly purchase one of the coats in memory of such a romantic story.

One late afternoon, they went to see the old palace at Seoul. As they entered the grounds the setting sun was shining redly on the lakes, which were covered with pink lotus in full bloom. A little cry of pleasure escaped Carol's lips. They crossed one of the lakes by a little rustic bridge, and traversed the long-neglected walks which led to summer-houses, bowers and pleasaunces. The largest summer-house, where the Royalties had been wont to picnic in the summer-time, was still in good condition, and the decoration was lovely to look upon. The architecture of the palace is Chinese, but some of the fantastic stone-carving is Corean.

Of the palace proper, but little remains, only a rabbit-warren of sleeping apartments and a few mouldering buildings. On the spot where the Queen was murdered—where once her own apartments stood—is now a simple monument to her memory.

The travellers felt that this was a place haunted by sad memories. They were not surprised that the Emperor left it after the tragedy, never to return.

The country round Seoul is beautiful and varied. In one walk it is possible to pass from typical Devonshire lanes to the wild moorlands of Scotland, and then again to

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descend to a river-bank reminiscent of a backwater on the Thames.

Such a walk they took one day to see the Great White Buddha, a huge image of the god carved out of a rock and white-washed. Under its shadow a Queen lies buried, a Queen who reigned in Seoul centuries ago and died in that city. She had been brought there as a bride from her country home by the side of a running brook. She hated the city and pined for the country. She longed to hear the little stream ripple past once more. So on her death-bed her last request, made in weak, hoarse tones, was : "Bury me within sound of running water." But—so the story goes—her wish was disregarded, and they placed her body in the Royal vault saying, "She is dead and will not know." But her spirit could not rest, and every moon she came to haunt them, wailing always, "Bury me within sound of running water." So at last they took her coffin out of the vault, out of the city, away to the fresh and fragrant country, and buried it close to the little mountain stream, under the shadow of the Great White Buddha. And her spirit was at peace.

Another day Captain Fairs took Carol to the orphanage at Seoul. — The Sisters are Englishwomen, who give up their lives to training little destitute girls, nearly all of whom have been thrown away soon after

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birth by their parents. They are taught to cook, wash clothes, and keep house in the Corean fashion, and they become such good and useful women that they are much sought after as brides by the young men of the place, and are generally married at sixteen.

They were charmed with the little quiet house in its green garden, and with the church, a small wooden structure, which breathed, Carol said, of restfulness and prayer.

She was very silent as they returned to the Consulate. Captain Fairs asked her, with concern, whether she was over-tired.

"No," she replied, "I was only thinking—thinking what splendid lives those Sisters lead."

Captain Fairs felt he had seen yet another side of her nature.

He turned to her impulsively as they entered the garden.

"I should like you to know my mother, Carol."

She smiled and looked up at him with wide, trustful eyes, the spell of the quiet hour with the Sisters still upon her.

"She would think I had done right this time," he went on hurriedly. "If only you—" What he would have said she did not know. She stood, with flushed cheeks, conscious only of the glad hurry of her heart, and heard her aunt's voice break in on the perfect moment, "Carol, dear child, where have you been?"

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CHAPTER XXIV

VOYAGE TO CHINA

"It is the midnight hour : —the beauteous sea,
Calm as the cloudless heaven, the heaven discloses,
While many a sparkling star, in quiet glee,
Far down within the watery sky reposes."

JOHN WILSON.

LEAVING the Consulate and Seoul with great regret, they started off again to Chemulpo, there to take the boat for China.

When they reached Chemulpo, the moon was shining brilliantly, lending an enchantment to the little run in the launch which conveyed them to the "Santo Maru."

Once on board they hurried below to the stifling little cabins, and turned in to the accompaniment of hoarse shouts and the noisy patter of many feet which lasted until the ship was under weigh. Then silence fell, broken only by the "chunk-chunk" of the engines and the gentle lap of the waves, but tirelessly, remorselessly the mosquitos attacked their helpless victims and sang a maddening song of triumph.

Carol passed a sleepless night, and at breakfast chanced to lament the excessive heat and dirtiness of the bathrooms.

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"But," remarked Mrs. Lake, whose cheery optimism rarely failed her, "the boy prepares your bath and expects you to take it. One must consider his feelings, I think, don't you? I take my bath, and he feels his trouble is not in vain. And that makes it very nice for all!"

This was unanswerable. But Carol, who was wrestling with a piece of hard salt ham, was determined to air her grievances.

"This ham is prehistoric," she exclaimed angrily.

"It isn't very nice food," her aunt interposed, in cheerful tones. "But then we shall the better appreciate good food later on, I think, don't you?"

Carol laughed at last. "I hope there will be some good food somewhere!" she replied.

"Why surely!" exclaimed her aunt. "Nice food on the Trans-Siberian Railway! So Colonel Shore told me." Here she beamed round the table. "And the men always know, I think, don't you?"

As they rose from the table she remarked to the steward:

"No, I didn't order coffee, but I've drunk it; it was very nice. Thank you, thank you so much!"

And Carol felt that such good-nature in adverse circumstances was to be envied. As she went up on deck, an American woman

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spoke to her—a thin, pale-faced woman of about thirty-five.

“Isn’t this a hateful boat?” she asked.

“Not very nice,” Carol agreed.

“And the food,” said another woman, also an American, lounging up with a peculiar undulating gait—a very fair woman with hair arranged *a la Madonna* and an ample figure. “Mr. Winter,” she continued, appealing to a little man in a white suit, who had followed her up the companion, “tell this lady about your experiences the first night on this boat, when they refused to serve dinner.”

Mr. Winter pulled a chair forward, and they all sat down. He was a small round-faced man with a bullet head, very closely shaven. His eyes were intensely blue, his nose turned up, and an upturned moustache shaded his mouth. He looked like an impertinent cherub trying to assume airs of importance.

Carol felt inclined to laugh as he related his grievances, with the pouting lips and troubled eyes of a spoilt child, while the two American ladies listened approvingly as if the subject were of universal interest.

Presently they moved off and Carol found herself alone with Mr. Winter who continued to talk to her, as if he had known her for years, and proceeded to tell her a long anecdote about himself.

“You must know that I am a Norwegian,”

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he said, "but I have many friends among the English. Lord Bellamy's second son is a great friend of mine. I well remember a six months' visit he and I paid to Paris when we were both twenty-two, both heart-whole, and both blessed with plenty of cash. Have you ever seen Mona Merrison?" he asked, rather suddenly.

Carol admitted that she had—once in London.

"You should have seen her then, in the height of her fame and beauty. Ah! she was lovely. Jack Meadows and I were infatuated. We went to the Folies Bergères night after night to gaze on her, and we sent her flowers and sweets. Then we began sending notes, and one night Jack got a reply. She would sup with him. I was half mad with jealousy, but I wasted no more time on her. I just found another girl to take about, and left Jack to his own devices." He paused. "The finale was rather funny."

Carol looked at him enquiringly. "Yes?" she said.

"Old Lord Bellamy heard of Jack's infatuation and he and Lady Bellamy came over to Paris. Jack was fast in Mona's toils, and he was very much in love. Mona had a great fondness for jewellery, and the poor boy had given her as much as he could afford. So what does he do one night, when Lady Bellamy is at the opera, but quietly take her

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diamonds, her pearls, and the famous rubies, and give them all to Mona!"

"I suppose it was soon discovered?" asked Carol, only half-interested.

"Curiously enough, not for three days," replied Mr. Winter. "Jack and I were both dining with his parents when the maid rushed in and announced the loss. Lord Bellamy was for starting to the police station, but Jack confessed, and his lordship went instead to Mona's flat." Mr. Winter leant back and laughed. "Lord Bellamy found Miss Merrison a very charming young woman. He had some difficulty, however, in making her give up the jewels, and he was obliged to write her a very substantial cheque. Still, he left the flat quite enamoured of the lovely Mona. Mona would not see Jack, and he wandered about disconsolately. Then one day he determined to buy her a bracelet, in the hope of winning her back. On entering the jeweller's shop, he saw on the counter a pair of beautiful candlesticks—gold and enamel. He asked the price, and was told that they were sold. He casually glanced at the label on them, and saw that they were to be sent to Miss Merrison. A man's visiting-card was also attached. It bore the name 'Lord Bellamy.' Jack was furious. He turned to the shopman, explained that some mistake had been made, cut off his father's card, and replaced

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it with his own. The Bellamys and Jack left Paris the next day, and so did I. So I never heard what Mona thought, nor whether Lord Bellamy ever discovered that Jack had been one too many for him ! ”

Mr. Winter got up as he finished his story to offer his chair to one of the American ladies who was approaching. She dropped into it languidly, and her friend seated herself beside her. Captain Fairs also joined the party. He had been casting black looks at Mr. Winter for monopolising Carol. Now he took up his position next to her, and felt content. A little breeze sprang up and troubled the waters. In the distance a flock of seabirds stood out against the sky, the black smoke obscuring them from time to time. The American ladies chatted incessantly on dress and travels, their rather raucous voices disturbing the peacefulness of the scene. Further down the deck could be heard Mrs. Lake.

“ Now that’s very interesting. You went through the siege, Mr. Smith, did you ? Now tell me about your days. Hardships, yes ? But we all have something to put up with, haven’t we ? ”

So the day wore away, and night fell, hot and steaming and oppressive in the close little cabins.

They woke to find that they were in Dalny Harbour. It lay calm and smiling

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under a cloudless sky. Where once the guns had sullenly boomed and the shells had created confusion, all was peace and quietude now. A German gun-boat and two German torpedo-catchers lay at anchor, while their crews watched the process of coaling. Many passenger-steamers, too, were moored to the harbour.

No sooner was the "Santo Maru" made fast than Mrs. Lake, Carol, and Captain Fairs went ashore, and started afoot for the town, through the worst mud it had been their lot to encounter.

Dalny, they were told, is considered to resemble Port Arthur, but they found it uninteresting, save from the point of view of the road-mender. They made a circuit of the principal streets in rickshaws, and gained an insight, by practical experience, into the depths of the ruts. They were told that the chief buildings had been burned during the war and that the town was not yet completely rebuilt. From one point they obtained a magnificent view of the harbour and defences.

Then the "Santo Maru" sailed for Tankyu. The night was stormy. Breakfast the next morning was for most of the passengers a farce, and after breakfast they were told the unwelcome news that, though the ship had come to her anchorage, the captain forbade the approach of the launch

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which should have come alongside to take passengers and luggage to the shore.

Great was the consternation of the passengers! Not allowed to land! Then they could not hope to reach Peking that day! In answer to their anxious enquiries they were told that, the sea being so rough and the wind so high, it was quite impossible to say when landing would be feasible. They congregated, grumbling, on the upper deck, and sat down dejectedly. The ship rolled and pitched, and strained at her anchorage.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the launch managed to get alongside, and hope revived. The passengers were helped along a shaky footboard composed of a couple of planks lashed together. Then, after much difficulty in getting the luggage aboard, they steamed off to another ship and proceeded to take off her passengers, a great many of whom were Japanese. During this process the launch went through all the antics that are possible to a boat. The Japanese women, as they came on board, sank on the deck moaning, and buried their faces in their hands. Carol felt very sorry for herself, and was glad of Captain Fairs' cheery companionship. He looked after her belongings, and shielded her with his umbrella from the driving rain.

"When we are over the bar," he said

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encouragingly, "you will feel quite well again!"

When we are over the bar!

It seemed an impossible feat to get over the bar. Three times they approached, only to go aground with a sickening heave and thump, and then, after a prodigious amount of rolling, full speed astern and out to sea again.

The excitement made Carol feel better, and she began to chat with Mr. Winter, who had approached her and Captain Fairs. He was pointing out to her the charms of a life in China, and she was telling him that she would not care to settle in the Far East, when—bang! crash!—and the launch heeled over. The dark American lady threw her arms round Mr. Winter's neck in alarm.

"We are going over!" she yelled.

"Nonsense!" cried Mr. Winter crossly, almost shaking her off.

"It takes more than that to knock a boat over," said Captain Fairs, laughing. "But I wish you had thought the same," he whispered to Carol.

"Why, we are over the bar at last!" exclaimed Mr. Winter.

"Then I can breathe again," murmured Carol.

Mr. Winter sat down at Carol's side, and pointed to the sun setting over the marshes.

"You wouldn't see a sunset in England like that," he said.

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"No," she admitted.

"Nor snipe in such quantities. Look at them! No, I would not exchange China even for my own country. Norway is endurable only in the winter—then it is glorious! Three months of sleighing when the world is all in twilight, and the towns are fairylands of snow and ice. You take your favourite lady friend, and you wrap her up in furs and drive her through the forests, over the moors, on—on—till the lights of an inn invite you to a supper by a roaring fire, and then you drive her home again. No sound but the grinding of the runners and the patter of the horses' feet—just you two alone in a world of silence."

"How romantic!" exclaimed Carol.

"It is—very!" he smiled. "I wish I might drive you in Norway! Ah, more snipe! Come up in front; we shall see better there."

They strolled forward, Captain Fairs watching them in moody silence.

"How dark it is getting!" exclaimed Carol. "It must be late!"

Mr. Winter took out his watch.

"It is seven-thirty," he told her.

"Then we have been four hours on this wretched launch!"

"Four hours!" echoed Mr. Winter. "It seems like a few minutes."

On the landing stage at Tankyu all was

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bustle and confusion. Coolies ran hither and thither trying to seize the luggage. Captain Fairs was standing, clasping five umbrellas, a suit-case, and a camera, when a man approached and hailed him by name.

"I have been sent by the Commissioner of Customs at Tientsin to look after you," he announced. "I will walk on to the hotel with the ladies, and leave you and this gentleman to bring the luggage."

It was only by the unexpected aid of this friend in need that fairly good rooms were secured at the hotel, a mere shanty erected on the platform of the railway station. The mosquito curtains on the beds were ragged and of dusky hue, and the walls were dingy with the dust of ages, but here, at anyrate, was *terra firma*. They could hear the querulous tones of the American ladies when their rooms were pointed out to them, and they were amused to hear from Captain Fairs that Mr. Winter had accepted with smiling philosophy the offer of a bed in the dining-room, to be made up when dinner should be over.

By the time Mrs. Lake and Carol came down to breakfast next morning, all the other travellers had departed. Captain Fairs was obviously glad to have Carol to himself. After breakfast they took train for Tientsin. All along the line they noticed Chinese graves, like beehives of mud, re-

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sembling, as Carol remarked, the "Great Panjandrum, with a button on the top!" They passed flooded fields of millet and rice, and everywhere were snipe flying low over the reeds.

At Tientsin they were met by the Commissioner of Customs, who drove them straight to the hotel for tiffin. Directly afterwards, he insisted on taking them to see the race-course, which, he declared, was one of the finest in the world. There was no race-meeting in progress, and the big grandstand looked cheerless and forlorn, seeming to cry out for the flutter of Ascot finery. Mrs. Lake heaved a deep sigh.

"I wish we had stayed in that shady hotel garden," she whispered to Carol.

Carol turned to Captain Fairs. "Auntie does not appreciate this as much as you do," she said in a low voice. "Even the sight of this empty course delights you, I believe."

"Everything delights me," he answered, "if only I am with you."

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CHAPTER XXV

PEKING

“When Joy and Pleasure come your way,
Put out your hand, don't say them nay
For you will pay for every one some day
Of Pleasure's Golden Flower suck deep,
Don't lose an hour—the time to sleep will come
And Pleasure will not keep.”

DAISY MCGEOCH.

THE sun was blazing fiercely, and the journey was a trying one, but at last Peking Station was reached. The travellers were glad to give their luggage into the charge of the “boy” from the “Wagon Lits” Hotel, and to walk to their destination after sitting still for so many hours. They joined a curious procession of passengers who had come by the train, and they were immensely diverted by the sight of the heterogeneous collection of household goods that formed the personal luggage of some of the Chinese families. One truck was piled up with mattresses, lamps, bird cages, and a perambulator; this they were unable to pass for some time, and Captain Fairbairn rather anxiously remarked that he hoped nobody would imagine that the queer truck-load belonged to him.

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They passed through the gate close to which, during the Boxer rising, the British relieving force had entered the city. Then they walked down Legation Street to the large white hotel.

In the early morning they set forth in rickshaws to the Drum Tower, from the top of which a magnificent view of Peking can be obtained. They climbed the steep and narrow stairs which seemed endless, and at last they reached the top, breathless, but triumphant. Mrs. Lake and Captain Fairs advanced cautiously to the edge of the narrow gallery and peered over.

"Carol, look down," urged her aunt.

"I dare not. I am always dizzy when I am on a height."

Mrs. Lake laughed. Captain Fairs turned and, after hesitating a moment, went up to Carol.

She was leaning with her back against the wall and her feet planted firmly on the broken masonry.

He put his arm round her. "Now will you look?" he asked persuasively.

She was trembling; her eyes met his for a moment shyly and full of sweet indecision. Then she looked away.

"You are not frightened?" he went on very tenderly.

She shook her head, and a little nervous smile stirred her lips.

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His arm tightened on her as he led her to the edge.

Far below they could see the city walls and the straight white roads intersecting the Tartar City, the Imperial City, and the Forbidden City. Little patches of colour moving along resolved themselves into people as they gazed.

Roofs of vivid green, of brilliant blue, and of gleaming gold shone in the sunlight. They could see the Great Wall, a solid aggressive barrier between Peking and the outer world.

Carol looked down unseeing, full of a sense of complete thankfulness and rest, until her aunt rather dryly announced that she wished to go. Then she realised that she was standing clasped in Captain Fairs' arms and that Mrs. Lake was watching them both with evident amusement. She freed herself with a sudden movement and hurried towards the staircase.

Mrs. Lake turned to speak to Captain Fairs, and found him gazing after her niece as if he had never seen her before, his face flushed, his eyes shining.

They entered the tower together, and came out of the blazing sunlight into a place of cool grey shadows.

Captain Fairs paused at the top of the steep and winding staircase. Far below they could see Carol's white gown fluttering in the darkness.

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"I have never felt afraid of a girl before," he said, "but somehow she's different. Do you think she cares?" he asked hoarsely.

"Do I think?" Mrs. Lake laughed. "What dense creatures you men are!"

* * * * *

The descent down the steep stairs in semi-gloom was somewhat awe-inspiring.

An insight into the Chinese character was afforded to Mrs. Lake and Carol as they pushed open the heavy door at the foot of the staircase. A little baby's fingers had been inserted in the hinge by a bigger brother, and, as the door swung back, the wee fingers were caught and badly bruised. The screaming child was then held up by his grinning brother to beg for pennies. In disgust at such deliberate cruelty Mrs. Lake turned away. Carol wished that she had command of the language and could say all that she felt.

Their way back to the hotel lay through a street entirely populated by Chinese, and again they had an instance of this callousness to suffering. Outside a tea-house a young Chinaman in a gay blue coat was swinging a pig round by its tail. The poor creature gave vent to horrible, piercing yells.

With a cry of dismay Carol motioned her rickshaw man to stop. He did so, supposing she was enjoying the sight.

"Number one, top piecee fun!" he cried.

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As he spoke, a rickshaw containing one of the secretaries to the British Embassy drew up beside her.

"For God's sake go on!" he urged. "Don't let those devils see that you mind! You are entirely in their mercy here. I assure you there are many crimes committed in broad daylight in China for less cause than a frown."

He touched her rickshaw man lightly with the ferrule of his stick, and with a laugh ordered him to proceed.

The man grinned back and broke into a run.

* * * * *

That day they lunched at the house of one of the most important British residents in Peking. Their host's private band, composed entirely of Chinamen, discoursed sweet music during lunch. A fragrance of flowers stole in at the windows drowning the subtle aroma of the East. The Chinese boys moved quickly about, their blue coats giving a pleasant touch of colour in the sombre room. A cheerful buzz of conversation proceeded from the guests. It was difficult to believe that there had ever been a reign of terror in this peaceful place.

Through the low windows the garden showed, green and restful. Only a tiny pile of ruins in one corner remained as a mute reminder of those dreadful days.

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Mr. Winter, the little Norwegian whom they had met on the "Santo Maru," was of the party. He audaciously told Carol that he had, in the first instance, declined the invitation, but, hearing that she was to be there, he had asked to be allowed to reconsider his decision. He led the conversation round to sleighing. One of the other guests, a merry little Dutchman, asked Carol if she went in for that sport at all. On her replying in the negative Mr. Winter struck in :

"But she is coming over to Norway next winter, and she has promised to let me take her sleighing."

"Do you know the penalty?" asked the little Dutchman.

"No. What is it?" enquired Carol.

"A kiss at the end of the drive."

"That won't trouble me," she said, with a glance at Captain Fairs.

"Why not?" asked both the men.

"Because," she said quickly, "I am not going at all. It is quite a fabrication of Mr. Winter's."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Winter. "You did say you were going to Norway some day—in winter if possible."

Carol smiled at him.

"And," he went on eagerly, "I never exact the penalty—unless—" he laughed.

"Yes?" asked the Dutchman.

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“Oh! unless I like the lady. I assure you Miss Medenham, you would love the winter in Norway. It is heaven. The air is like Satin, ice-cold. The snow is so purely white glistening like diamonds. The pine trees loom round the track, vague, mysterious, against a dull grey sky. The sun hangs like a ball of gold just above the horizon. It is a Hans Andersen fairy tale come to life. Along the road go Kay and Gerda in their magic sleigh. Gerda is wrapped in her fur robes and hood; only her little rosy mouth her nose and eyes appear. Kay stands behind, whip in hand, urging the reindeer on. Sometimes the maiden tumbles out, so terrific is the pace. Then the gallant charioteer descends, picks her up, replaces her in the sleigh, and on they go again. Ah! it's a grand place, is Norway!”

Carol and the Dutchman both laughed heartily.

“You are quite poetical,” said Carol.

Then she turned to look at the slight, erect figure, the golden head, and the gay blue eyes of the man she loved. By a thousand signs she knew that she alone existed for him.

He came across to her at the first opportunity after lunch and dropped into a chair by her side. He made none of his foolish speeches now. Indeed, he seemed a little tongue-tied and awkward in her presence,

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yet she had a feeling of perfect content whenever she was alone with him.

"We are going to the Zoo later on. You had better go back to the hotel and rest now," he said, in the new masterful way that delighted her.

"I have just been hearing how the Zoo came to be founded," she told him laughing "The Chinese Empress was presented, some years ago, with an elephant and a French poodle. She found the poodle rather obstreperous and the elephant distinctly a white one. So she caused a garden to be constructed for them, and since then the collection has gradually grown."

They enjoyed the expedition there immensely. The well-laid out gardens, the orchards and the glass-houses were a pleasure to all. Carol especially liked being punted, in a big flat-bottomed boat, along the canal that runs through the gardens. Mrs. Lake admitted that the tea at the excellent cafe was, to her, not the least interesting part of the programme.

When they got back to the hotel they found Colonel Shore nervously pacing up and down the hall, singing under his breath, "In the North Sea lived a whale!"

In her excitement, Mrs. Lake dropped parasol and bag, and held out both her hands as she hurried towards him.

"How delightful!" she exclaimed. "How

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nice ! Colonel Shore, you are very welcome. I always think that the sorrow of parting is swallowed up in the joy of meeting, don't you ? ”

They all laughed and crowded round to greet him. Then Carol cleverly contrived to lead Captain Fairs away, leaving the older people *tete-a-tete*.

Some hours later a rather shy and wholly happy elderly lady knocked at her niece's door and begged admittance. Carol jumped off her bed and ran to open the door.

One glance told her all. Her aunt's somewhat confused explanations were received by a most sympathetic well-wisher. Then Carol put her curly head on her aunt's shoulder and shed a few tears. “ I am so glad, dear,” she whispered. “ Colonel Shore is a perfect dream, and now he will keep on the bungalow.”

“ He leaves us to-morrow,” went on Mrs. Lake. “ But in January he will come to England and fetch me out to Peshawar. Only for our honeymoon you know. He is retiring the end of this year. Why, Carol, what is it ? ”

“ Oh nothing, only—auntie, shall I ever be so happy as you ? ”

Next day they went through green fields and a little copse, which reminded them of England, to visit the Temple of Heaven, a circular building quite lacking in decoration

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both without and within, but somehow more beautiful and impressive than the gilded temples of India. To four happy people it was a place of enchantment. They saw the spot on which once a year the Emperor stands, imagining it to be the centre of the world, and himself to be the most important person in that world.

Then, after a farewell dinner-party to Colonel Shore and all the friends they were leaving behind, they bade goodbye to Peking.

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CHAPTER XXVI

HOMeward BOUND

“To think that to the world this night may seem
Only the hours ’twixt sunset-time and sleep—
This night, when love made real my dearest dream,
And gave it me to keep!”

CHARLES BUXTON GOING.

HOMeward BOUND! With mingled feelings Carol and Mrs. Lake set forth on the last stage of their tour.

They left Peking early in the morning, accompanied by Captain Fairs, and reached Shan-hai-kwan the same evening. They spent the night at the railway hotel of that picturesque town, with its crowded bazaar and its little stream ambling through the main street. They had just time to gaze at the piece of the Great Wall which can be seen at Shan-hai-kwan and to marvel at the solidity of its masonry.

Next evening they reached Mukden, where they were met by the British Consul-General, who conducted them to their hotel, riding alongside their carriage on his sturdy pony.

The proprietor stood bowing a welcome, amid a crowd of yelling Chinese boys, chiefly

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rickshaw men, who were blocking the entrance. They were quickly dispersed by the sticks and fists of the hotel boys, much to Carol's amusement.

They had decided to spend a day or two in Mukden, in order that an excursion might be made to the tombs of the First Manchu Dynasty. Thither they went in rickshaws the afternoon after their arrival.

Through the heart of the greenest of little woods, across green fields and a stretch of sandy plain, the rickshaws sped. They stopped before a beautiful gateway set in a frame of greenery, and their occupants alighted.

After walking through the gateway they found themselves in a garden full of stone animals, life-size and grotesque in form. They climbed a tower, whose steps were worn by the restless feet of countless generations, and gazed through a stone lattice-work into another garden, where, on flat stones, were inscribed the deeds and virtues of the dead monarchs. Overhead a bird sang lustily; the "scissors-grinder," that noisiest of insects, shrieked without ceasing. But there was no human sound; the Chinese boys who were peeping at the visitors were quite subdued. The place seemed full of peace, of silence, and of memories—a worthy burial-ground for kings.

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In the evening stillness they returned to their rickshaws, and were taken quickly away back over the fields and the sandy plain, through the little wood, back to Mukden with its noise and dust.

As they entered the hotel, they heard a pleasant baritone voice singing a German drinking song. Then came a storm of applause and a chinking of glasses. The proprietor met them in the hall, full of apologies. "German officers on their way to Peking," he explained. "Very gay, very noisy-fellows."

Mrs. Lake smiled. "We do not mind," she said. "And we are dining with the Consul-General to-night." They caught a glimpse, through the glass panes of the coffee-room door, of flushed faces, ruffled heads, and smart blue uniforms.

When, after a pleasant dinner at the Consulate—a typically Chinese, one-storeyed house, built round a quadrangle—they returned to the hotel, they found that the noise had become pandemonium. Peaceful sleep that night was an impossibility. Captain Fairs announced in the morning that he had dreamt he was singing in a cats' chorus, all the members of which were yelling different songs. This, their first experience of the West for many months, was hardly a fortunate one.

They felt jaded and worn as they drove

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down to Mukden Station over the dustiest roads they had ever seen. There they were met by the far from cheerful news that some distance ahead the railway line had been destroyed and that it was doubtful whether a train could get through to catch the connection at Kwanchenpzu. Consternation reigned. Now that their faces were set towards home they could not brook delay. Carol and Captain Fairs, though they were hardly aware of it, longed for the future which awaited them in England. The three expressed their discomfiture in various ways. Captain Fairs fumed after the manner of men; Carol's pretty eyes were tear-filled, but she said nothing; Mrs. Lake did her best to infuse a little cheerfulness into them all.

The train fussed into the station. A dejected party climbed into it. Very slow progress was made as far as Chang Tu. There they stopped, and were informed that a train had been overturned owing to the destruction of the line, and that several people had been injured. On the platform sat one of the injured—a woman, with all her teeth knocked out—rocking herself backwards and forwards and sobbing pitifully. They were told that armed and mounted police were on the track of the miscreants who had ripped up the line, and that an arrest might be expected at any moment.

For nearly two hours the train remained

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stationary at Chang Tu. The heat was almost unbearable, and all were thirsty and weary. No fruit could be obtained. One of the passengers—a genial Frenchman—was carrying some rather warm bottled lemonade. This he gladly passed round. Children were crying, and there was a general feeling of depression and discomfort. Mrs. Lake alone remained unmoved and cheerful. When at last the train made a move, she exclaimed triumphantly :

“ There ! You see we’re going on ! All’s well that ends well, I always think, don’t you ? ” But Carol did not reply.

The train crept on slowly and cautiously. It reached the newly laid metals, and passed them safely, but so slowly that many of the travellers alighted to photograph the derailed locomotive, which lay helpless on its side in front of a twisted line of coaches.

At last they arrived at Kwanchenpzu, only to find that the Russian train had left exactly an hour before !

Suave officials approached the raging passengers. Yes, they admitted, a wire had been received from Mukden, informing them of the block, but it was impossible and unprecedented to delay the Russian train. What could be done ? They shrugged their shoulders and smiled. The genial Frenchman hurled all the Russian that he knew at one fair giant, and demanded an interview

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with the station-master. All the men departed in the wake of the official; the women kept guard over the hand baggage. A baby wailed in its mother's arms. Mrs. Lake fanned herself complacently. In half-an-hour the men returned with the announcement that a special would be provided at a cost of eighty pounds. Mrs. Lake gasped, but agreed with the rest that the connection must be made, whatever the expense.

Wearily the passengers stumbled into the station waiting-room. There they ate stale bread and drank Russian tea out of long glasses. Then they migrated into the costly special.

The night journey was not a pleasant one. There were other occupants of that special train besides the human beings. These other occupants were small, but active and remorseless, as all were able to testify the next morning.

However, they speedily forgot their troubles when they found that they had reached Harbin six hours before the departure of the Trans-Siberian train.

They repaired *en masse* to the hotel. After a welcome bath and tiffin, they set out in very ramshackle drosckys, which were driven at break-neck speed, to see the town. They were amazed at the squalor, the filth, the tawdriness of the streets. Dust was everywhere. People of all nationalities

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jostled each other on the pavements. Chinamen squatted on the paths, playing cards. A Japanese girl clattered past, her lacquered clogs ringing on the stones. Two German officers went by, their swords clanking. There were Russian policemen at every corner. Carol noticed a drunken man—young, fair, and unmistakably English, leaning up against a cafe. A carriage swept by. Lolling on its cushions was a fair woman, beautiful as only a fair Russian can be, holding up a dainty parasol in her white-gloved hands. Her coachman looked wild and unkempt, in his high boots and velveteen sleeveless coat.

From one street to another they were driven. Everywhere they saw the same dirty tumble-down buildings, the same ill-paved dusty roads. They were told that the people are undisciplined and insurrectionary, and that it is dangerous to wander abroad at night fall. They were not surprised to hear that, by officers quartered there, Harbin is known as "The Red Hell."

That evening they took their places in the Trans-Siberian train, which for eight days was their home. Every few hours the train drew up at a station, and all her passengers would pour forth on to the platform, where they would pace up and down in an endeavour to get warm. After the heat they had recently experienced, the cold of Siberia

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seemed intense. Frequently they passed the loaded convict trains, and caught glimpses of desperate faces pressed against the barred windows.

Otherwise, to most of the passengers, those eight days were monotonous. To Captain Fairs and Carol, who rejoiced in each other's mere presence, every moment was full of quiet happiness. This silent understanding was so perfect that Captain Fairs hesitated to change their relationship by the spoken word.

On the ninth day Moscow was reached. There was no time to do more than see the Kremlin and eat caviare at the Hermitage. Then on they went to the beautiful city of Warsaw, thence to Berlin and Hanover, and so to Flushing, where, late at night, they embarked for Queenborough.

Mrs. Lake hastened to her cabin at once, leaving Captain Fairs and Carol on deck. The air was cold, and Captain Fairs eagerly untrapped the rugs to draw out a thick coat for Carol.

When he had helped her into it, his hands lingered on her shoulders. Suddenly he felt that he must know his fate. He could not bear the parting—now so near—without the certain knowledge that she was his. Yet still he dreaded to put his love into words. He bent his head and his lips just touched the little curls that lay on her neck. To his

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surprise she turned her head and lifted her lips to his.

“Good-night,” she said simply.

He put his arms round her and drew her into a close embrace.

“You—you realise what you are doing, Carol?” he asked presently.

“I am only saying good-night,” she replied, breathless and half-laughing.

“You are saying good-night to your lover—good-bye for ever to your friend.”

She raised herself on tiptoe and kissed him on his eyes.

“Dear blind friend Tony,” she said softly. “Don’t you know that I—?”

“Carol!” He held her away from him and looked down into her eyes. “Did you mean me—in Shanghai?” She nodded.

“I’m afraid—I meant you—all the time—everywhere.”

THE END





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